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Volume

by Charles Bukowski

Flower, Fist and Bestial Wail (1960)  
Longshot Pomes for Broke Players (1962)  
Run with the Hunted (1962)  
It Catches My Heart in Its Hands (1963)  
Crucifix in a Deathhand (1965)  
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Living on Luck: Selected Letters 1960s-1970s, Volume 2 (1995)  
Betting on the Muse: Poems & Stories (1996)

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1

### Epigraph

my wrists are rivers  
my fingers are words

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Bukowski, Charles: jam [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           that Harbor Freeway south through the downtown  
2           area---I mean, it can simply become  
3           unbelievable.

4           last Friday evening I was sitting there  
5           motionless behind a wall of red taillights,  
6           there wasn't even first gear movement  
7           as masses of exhaust fumes  
8           greyed the evening air, engines over-  
9           heated  
10          and there was the smell of a clutch  
11          burning out  
12          somewhere---  
13          it seemed to come from ahead of me---  
14          from that long slow rise of freeway where  
15          the cars were working  
16          from first gear to neutral  
17          again and again  
18          and from neutral back to  
19          first gear.

20          on the radio I heard the news  
21          of that day  
22          at least 6 times, I was  
23          well versed in world  
24          affairs.  
25          the remainder of the stations played a  
26          thin, sick music.  
27          the classical stations refused to come in  
28          clearly  
29          and when they did

30 it was a stale repetition of standard and  
31 tiresome works.

32 I turned the radio off.  
33 a strange whirling began in my  
34 head---it circled behind the forehead, clock-

[Page 16]

35 wise, went past the ears and around to the  
36 back of the head, then back to the forehead  
37 and around  
38 again.  
39 I began to wonder, is this what happens  
40 when one goes  
41 mad?

42 I considered getting out of my car.  
43 I was in the so-called fast  
44 lane.  
45 I could see myself out there  
46 out of my car  
47 leaning against the freeway divider,  
48 arms folded.  
49 then I would slide down to a sitting  
50 position, putting my head between  
51 my legs.

52 I stayed in the car, bit my tongue, turned  
53 the radio back on, willed the whirling to  
54 stop  
55 as I wondered if any of the others had to  
56 battled against their  
57 compulsions  
58 as I did?

59 then the car ahead of me  
60 MOVED  
61 a foot, 2 feet, 3 feet!

62 I shifted to first gear ...  
63 there was MOVEMENT!  
64 then I was back in neutral  
65 BUT  
66 we had moved from 7 to  
67 ten feet.

68 hearing the world news for the  
69 7th time,

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70 it was still all bad  
71 but all of us listening,

72           we could handle that too  
73           because we knew  
74           that there was nothing worse than  
75           looking at  
76           that same license plate  
77           that same dumb head sticking up  
78           from behind the headrest  
79           in the car ahead of you  
80           as time dissolved  
81           as the temperature gauge leaned  
82           more to the right  
83           as the gas gauge leaned  
84           more to the left  
85           as we wondered  
86           whose clutch was burning  
87           out?

88           we were like some last, vast  
89           final dinosaur  
90           crawling feebly home somewhere,  
91           somehow, maybe  
92           to  
93           die.

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Bukowski, Charles:two toughs [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           at L.A. City College there were two toughs, me and Jed  
2           Anderson.  
3           Anderson was one of the best running backs in the  
4           history of the school, a real breakaway threat  
5           anytime he got the football.  
6           I was pretty tough physically but looked at sports  
7           as a game for freaks.  
8           I thought a bigger game was challenging those  
9           who attempted to teach  
10          us.

11          anyhow, Jed and I were the two biggest lights on  
12          campus, he piled up his 60, 70 and 80 yard  
13          runs in the night games  
14          and during the days  
15          slouched in my seat  
16          I made up what I didn't know  
17          and what I did know  
18          was so bad  
19          many a teacher was made to  
20          dance to it.

21 and one grand day  
22 Jed and I  
23 finally met.  
24 it was at a little jukebox place  
25 across from campus and  
26 he was sitting with his  
27 pals  
28 and I was sitting with  
29 mine.

30 "go on! go on! talk to him!"  
31 my pals  
32 urged.  
33 I said, "fuck that gym  
34 boy. I am one with

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35 Nietzsche, let him come  
36 over here!"

37 finally Jed got up to get a  
38 pack of smokes from the  
39 machine and one of my  
40 friends asked,  
41 "are you afraid of that  
42 man?"

43 I got up and walked behind  
44 Jed as he was reaching into the  
45 machine  
46 for his pack.

47 "hello, Jed," I  
48 said.

49 he turned: "hello,  
50 Hank."

51 then he reached into his  
52 rear pocket,  
53 pulled out a pint of  
54 whiskey, handed it to  
55 me.

56 I took a mighty hit,  
57 handed it  
58 back.

59 "Jed, what are you  
60 going to do  
61 after

62 L.A.C.C.?"

63 "I'm going to play  
64 for Notre Dame."

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65 then he walked back  
66 to his table  
67 and I walked back  
68 to mine.

69 "what'd he say? what'd  
70 he say?"

71 "nothing much."

72 anyhow, Jed never made it  
73 to Notre Dame  
74 and I never made it  
75 anywhere  
76 either---  
77 the years just swept us  
78 away  
79 but there were others  
80 who went  
81 on, including one fellow  
82 who became a famous  
83 sports columnist  
84 and I had to look at his  
85 photo  
86 for decades  
87 in the newspaper  
88 as I inherited those  
89 cheap rooms  
90 and those roaches  
91 and those airless  
92 dreary  
93 nights.

94 but  
95 I was still proud of that moment  
96 back then  
97 when Jed handed me  
98 that pint  
99 and  
100 I drained

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101 a third of it  
102 with all the disciples  
103 watching.

104 damn, there was no way  
105 it seemed  
106 we could ever  
107 lose  
108 but we did.

109 and it took me  
110 3 or 4 decades to  
111 move on just a  
112 little.  
113 and Jed,  
114 if you are still here  
115 tonight,  
116 (I forgot to tell you  
117 then)  
118 here's a thanks  
119 for that drink.

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Bukowski, Charles: my German buddy [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems  
(1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 tonight  
2 drinking Singha  
3 malt liquor from  
4 Thailand  
5 and listening to  
6 Wagner

7 I can't believe that  
8 he is not in  
9 the other  
10 room  
11 or around the  
12 corner  
13 or alive  
14 someplace  
15 tonight

16 and he is  
17 of course  
18 as I am taken  
19 by the sound of  
20 him

21 and little goosebumps  
22 run along  
23 both of my  
24 arms



25           then a  
26           chill

27           he's here

28           now.

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Bukowski, Charles:happy birthday [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1            when Wagner was an  
2            old man  
3            a birthday party was given  
4            in his  
5            honor  
6            and a couple of  
7            youthful  
8            incidental compositions  
9            were played.

10           afterwards  
11           he asked,  
12           "who wrote those?"

13           "you did," he was  
14           told.

15           "ah," he responded,  
16           "it's as I have always  
17           suspected: death  
18           then  
19           does have some  
20           virtue."

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Bukowski, Charles:the telephone [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1            will bring you people

2           with its ring,  
3           people who do not know what to do with  
4           their time  
5           and they will ache to  
6           infect you with  
7           this  
8           from a distance  
9           (although they would prefer  
10          to actually be in the same room  
11          to better project their nullity upon  
12          you).

13          the telephone is needed for  
14          emergency purposes only.

15          these people are not  
16          emergencies, they are  
17          calamities.

18          I have never welcomed the ring of a  
19          telephone.

20          "hello," I will answer  
21          guardedly.

22          "this is Dwight."

23          already you can feel their imbecile  
24          yearning to invade.  
25          they are the people-fleas that  
26          crawl the  
27          psyche.

28          "yes, what is it?"

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29          "well, I'm in town tonight and  
30          I thought ..."

31          "listen, Dwight, I'm tied up, I  
32          can't ..."

33          "well, maybe another  
34          time?"

35          "maybe not ..."

36 each person is only given so many  
37 evenings  
38 and each wasted evening is  
39 a gross violation against the  
40 natural course of  
41 your only  
42 life;  
43 besides, it leaves an aftertaste  
44 which often lasts two or three days  
45 depending upon the  
46 visitor.

47 the telephone is only for  
48 emergency purposes.

49 it has taken me  
50 decades  
51 but I have finally found out  
52 how to say  
53 "no."

54 now  
55 don't be concerned for them,  
56 please:  
57 they will simply dial another  
58 number.

59 it could be  
60 yours.

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61 "hello," you will  
62 say.

63 and they will say,  
64 "this is Dwight."

65 and then  
66 you  
67 be  
68 the kind  
69 understanding  
70 soul.

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Bukowski, Charles: begging [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           like most of you, I've had so many jobs that  
2           I feel as if I were gutted and my insides  
3           thrown to the winds.  
4           I've met some good people along the  
5           way and also the  
6           other kind.  
7           yet when I think of all those  
8           I have worked with---  
9           even though decades have passed---  
10          Karl  
11          comes to mind  
12          first.

13          I remember Karl: our jobs required we  
14          both wear aprons  
15          tied from behind and around  
16          the neck with string.

17          I was Karl's underling.  
18          "we got an easy job," he  
19          told me.

20          each day as one by one our superiors arrived  
21          Karl would make a slight bend at the waist,  
22          smile, and with a nod of the head  
23          greet each: "good morning Dr. Stein,"  
24          or, "good morning Mr. Day" or  
25          Mrs. Knight or if the lady was unattached  
26          "good morning, Lilly" or Betty or Fran.

27          I never  
28          spoke.

29          Karl seemed concerned at this and  
30          one day he took me aside: "hey,  
31          where the fuck else you going to get a

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32          two hour lunch like we  
33          do?"

34          "nowhere, I guess ..."

35          "well, o.k., look, for guys like you and me,  
36          this is as good as it can get, this is all  
37          there is."

38 I waited.

39 "so look, it's hard to suck up to them at first, it  
40 didn't come easy for me  
41 but after a while I realized that it  
42 didn't matter.  
43 I just grew a shell.  
44 now I've got my shell, got  
45 it?"

46 I looked at him and sure enough he did look like he had  
47 a shell, there was a mask-like look to his  
48 face and the eyes were null, void and  
49 undisturbed; I was looking at a weathered and  
50 beaten conch.

51 some weeks went by.  
52 nothing changed: Karl bowed and scraped and smiled  
53 undaunted, perfect in his  
54 role.  
55 that we were perishable, perhaps didn't occur to  
56 him  
57 or  
58 that greater gods might be  
59 watching.

60 I did my  
61 work.

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62 then, one day, Karl took me  
63 aside again.

64 "listen, Dr. Morely spoke to me  
65 about you."

66 "yes?"

67 "he asked me what was wrong with  
68 you."

69 "what did you tell  
70 him?"

71 "I told him that you were  
72 young."

73 "thanks."

74 upon receiving my next check, I  
75 quit

76 but

77 still  
78 had to  
79 eventually settle for another similar  
80 job  
81 and  
82 viewing the  
83 new Karls  
84 I finally forgave them all  
85 but not myself:

86 being perishable sometimes makes a  
87 man  
88 strange  
89 almost  
90 unemployable

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91 most  
92 obnoxious---  
93 no servant of  
94 free  
95 enterprise.

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Bukowski, Charles:the feel of it [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1 A. Huxley died at 69,  
2 much too early for such a  
3 fierce talent,  
4 and I read all his  
5 works  
6 but actually  
7 Point Counter Point  
8 did help a bit  
9 in carrying me through  
10 the factories and the  
11 drunk tanks and the

12 unsavory  
13 ladies.  
14 that  
15 book  
16 along with Hamsun's  
17 Hunger  
18 they helped a  
19 bit.  
20 great books are  
21 the ones we  
22 need.

23 I was astonished at  
24 myself for liking the  
25 Huxley book  
26 but it did come from  
27 such a rabid  
28 beautiful  
29 pessimistic  
30 intellectualism,  
31 and when I first  
32 read P.C.P.  
33 I was living in a  
34 hotel room  
35 with a wild and

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36 crazy  
37 alcoholic woman  
38 who once threw  
39 Pound's Cantos  
40 at me  
41 and missed,  
42 as they did  
43 with me.

44 I was working  
45 as a packer  
46 in a light fixture  
47 plant  
48 and once  
49 during a drinking  
50 bout  
51 I told the lady,  
52 "here, read this!"  
53 (referring to  
54 Point Counter  
55 Point.)

56 "ah, jam it up  
57 your ass!" she  
58 screamed at  
59 me.

60 anyhow, 69 seemed

61 too early for Aldous  
62 Huxley to  
63 die.  
64 but I guess it's  
65 just as fair  
66 as the death of a  
67 scrubwoman  
68 at the same  
69 age.

70 it's just that  
71 with those who

[Page 33]

72 help us  
73 get on through,  
74 then  
75 all that light  
76 dying, it works the  
77 gut a bit---  
78 scrubwomen, cab drivers,  
79 cops, nurses, bank  
80 robbers, priests,  
81 fishermen, fry cooks,  
82 jockeys and the  
83 like  
84 be  
85 damned.

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Bukowski, Charles:the greatest actor of our day [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 he's getting fatter and fatter,  
2 almost bald  
3 he has a wisp of hair  
4 in the back  
5 which he twists  
6 and holds  
7 with a rubber band.

8 he's got a place in the hills  
9 and he's got a place in the  
10 islands  
11 and few people ever see  
12 him.  
13 some consider him the greatest  
14 actor of our  
15 day.



16 he has few friends, a  
17 very few.  
18 with them, his favorite  
19 pastime is  
20 eating.

21 at rare times he is reached  
22 by telephone  
23 usually  
24 with an offer to act  
25 in an exceptional (he's  
26 told)  
27 motion picture.

28 he answers in a very soft  
29 voice:

30 "oh, no, I don't want to  
31 make any more movies ..."

[Page 35]

32 "can we send you the  
33 screenplay?"

34 "all right ..."

35 then  
36 he's not heard from  
37 again.

38 usually  
39 what he and his few friends  
40 do  
41 after eating  
42 (if the night is cold)  
43 is to have a few drinks  
44 and watch the screenplays  
45 burn  
46 in the fireplace.

47 or  
48 after eating (on  
49 warm evenings)  
50 after a few  
51 drinks  
52 the screenplays  
53 are taken  
54 frozen  
55 out of cold

56 storage.  
57 he hands some  
58 to his friends  
59 keeps some  
60 then  
61 together  
62 from the veranda  
63 they toss them  
64 like flying saucers  
65 far out  
66 into the spacious

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67 canyon  
68 below.

69 then  
70 they all go  
71 back in  
72 knowing  
73 instinctively  
74 that the screenplays  
75 were  
76 bad. (at least,  
77 he senses it and  
78 they  
79 accept  
80 that.)

81 it's a real good  
82 world  
83 up there:  
84 well-earned, self-  
85 sufficient  
86 and  
87 hardly  
88 dependent  
89 upon the  
90 variables.

91 there's  
92 all that time  
93 to eat  
94 drink  
95 and  
96 wait on death  
97 like  
98 everybody  
99 else.

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Bukowski, Charles:days like razors, nights full of rats [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           as a very young man I divided an equal amount of time between  
2           the bars and the libraries; how I managed to provide for  
3           my other ordinary needs is the puzzle; well, I simply didn't  
4           bother too much with that---  
5           if I had a book or a drink then I didn't think too much of  
6           other things---fools create their own  
7           paradise.

8           in the bars, I thought I was a tough, I broke things, fought  
9           other men, etc.

10          in the libraries it was another matter: I was quiet, went  
11          from room to room, didn't so much read entire books  
12          as parts of them: medicine, geology, literature and  
13          philosophy. psychology, math, history, other things, put me  
14          off. with music I was more interested in the music and in the  
15          lives of the composers than in the technical aspects ...

16          however, it was with the philosophers that I felt a brotherhood:  
17          Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, even old hard-to-read Kant;  
18          I found Santayana, who was very popular at the time, to be  
19          limp and a bore; Hegel you really had to dig for, especially  
20          with a hangover; there are many I read who I have forgotten,  
21          perhaps properly so, but I remember one fellow who wrote an  
22          entire book in which he proved that the moon was not there  
23          and he did it so well that afterwards you thought, he's  
24          absolutely right, the moon is not there.

25          how the hell is a young man going to deign to work an  
26          8 hour day when the moon isn't even there?  
27          what else  
28          might be missing?

29          and  
30          I didn't like literature so much as I did the literary  
31          critics; they were real pricks, those guys; they used  
32          fine language, beautiful in its way, to call other

[Page 38]

33          critics, other writers, assholes. they  
34          perked me up.

35          but it was the philosophers who satisfied  
36          that need  
37          that lurked somewhere within my confused skull: wading  
38          through their excesses and their  
39          clotted vocabulary  
40          they still often

41           stunned  
42           leaped out  
43           with a flaming gambling statement that appeared to be  
44           absolute truth or damned near  
45           absolute truth,  
46           and this certainty was what I was searching for in a daily  
47           life that seemed more like a piece of  
48           cardboard.

49           what great fellows those old dogs were, they got me past  
50           days like razors and nights full of rats; and women  
51           bargaining like auctioneers from hell.

52           my brothers, the philosophers, they spoke to me unlike  
53           anybody on the streets or anywhere else; they  
54           filled an immense void.  
55           such good boys, ah, such good  
56           boys!

57           yes, the libraries helped; in my other temple, the  
58           bars, it was another matter, more simplistic, the  
59           language and the way was  
60           different ...

61           library days, bar nights.  
62           the nights were alike,  
63           there's some fellow sitting nearby, maybe not a  
64           bad sort, but for me he doesn't shine right,  
65           there's a gruesome deadness there---I think of my father,  
66           of schoolteachers, of faces on coins and bills, of dreams  
67           about murderers with dull eyes; well,

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68           somehow this fellow and I get to exchanging glances,  
69           a fury slowly begins to gather: we are enemies, cat and  
70           dog, priest and atheist, fire and water; tension builds,  
71           block piled upon block, waiting for the crash; our hands  
72           fold and unfold, we drink, now, finally with a  
73           purpose:

74           his face turns to me:  
75           "sumpin' ya don't like, buddy?"

76           "yeah. you."

77           "wanna do sumpin' about it?"

78           "certainly."

79           we finish our drinks, rise, move to the back of the

80 bar, out into the alley; we  
81 turn, face each other.

82 I say to him, "there's nothing but space between us. you  
83 care to close that  
84 space?"

85 he rushes toward me and somehow it's a part of the part of the  
86 part.

[Page 40]

Bukowski, Charles: in and out of the dark [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems  
(1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 my wife likes movie houses, the popcorn and soft drinks, the  
2 settling into seats, she finds a child's delight in  
3 this and I am happy for her---but really, I myself, I must have  
4 come from another place, I must have been a mole in another  
5 life, something that burrowed and hid alone:  
6 the other people crowded in the seats, near and far, give me  
7 feelings that I dislike; it's stupid, maybe, but there it  
8 is; and then  
9 there's the darkness and then the  
10 giant human faces, bodies, that move about on the screen, they  
11 speak and we  
12 listen.

13 of one hundred movies there's one that's fair, one that's good  
14 and ninety eight that are very bad.  
15 most movies start badly and steadily get  
16 worse;  
17 if you can believe the actions and speech of the  
18 characters  
19 you might even believe that the popcorn you chew also  
20 has a meaning of  
21 sorts.  
22 (well, it might be that people see so many movies  
23 that when they finally see one not  
24 so bad as the others, they think it's  
25 great. an Academy Award means that you don't stink  
26 quite as much as your cousin.)

27 the movie ends and we are out in the street, moving  
28 toward the car; "well," says my wife, "it wasn't as  
29 good as they say."  
30 "no," I say, "it wasn't."

31 "there were a few good parts, though," she replies.  
32 "yeah," I answer.

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33 we are at the car, get in, then I am driving us out  
34 of that part of town; we look around at the night;  
35 the night looks good.

36 "you hungry?" she asks.

37 "yes. you?"

38 we stop at a signal; I watch the red light;  
39 I could eat that red light---anything, anything at  
40 all to fill the void; millions of dollars spent to create  
41 something more terrible than the actual lives of  
42 most living things; one should never have to pay an  
43 admission to hell.

44 the light changes and we escape,  
45 forward.

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Bukowski, Charles:be kind [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 we are always asked  
2 to understand the other person's  
3 viewpoint  
4 no matter how  
5 out-dated  
6 foolish or  
7 obnoxious.

8 one is asked  
9 to view  
10 their total error  
11 their life-waste  
12 with  
13 kindness,  
14 especially if they are  
15 aged.

16 but age is the total of

17           our doing.  
18           they have aged  
19           badly  
20           because they have  
21           lived  
22           out of focus,  
23           they have refused to  
24           see.

25           not their fault?

26           whose fault?  
27           mine?

28           I am asked to hide  
29           my viewpoint  
30           from them

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31           for fear of their  
32           fear.

33           age is no crime

34           but the shame  
35           of a deliberately  
36           wasted  
37           life

38           among so many  
39           deliberately  
40           wasted  
41           lives

42           is.

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Bukowski, Charles: the man with the beautiful eyes [from The Last Night of the  
Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           when we were kids  
2           there was a strange house  
3           all the shades were  
4           always  
5           drawn

6           and we never heard voices  
7           in there  
8           and the yard was full of  
9           bamboo  
10          and we liked to play in  
11          the bamboo  
12          pretend we were  
13          Tarzan  
14          (although there was no  
15          Jane).  
16          and there was a  
17          fish pond  
18          a large one  
19          full of the  
20          fattest goldfish  
21          you ever saw  
22          and they were  
23          tame.  
24          they came to the  
25          surface of the water  
26          and took pieces of  
27          bread  
28          from our hands.

29          our parents had  
30          told us:  
31          "never go near that  
32          house."  
33          so, of course,  
34          we went.

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35          we wondered if anybody  
36          lived there.  
37          weeks went by and we  
38          never saw  
39          anybody.

40          then one day  
41          we heard  
42          a voice  
43          from the house  
44          "YOU GOD DAMNED  
45          WHORE!"

46          it was a man's  
47          voice.

48          then the screen  
49          door  
50          of the house was  
51          flung open  
52          and the man



53 walked  
54 out.

55 he was holding a  
56 fifth of whiskey  
57 in his right  
58 hand.  
59 he was about  
60 30.  
61 he had a cigar  
62 in his  
63 mouth,  
64 needed a  
65 shave.  
66 his hair was  
67 wild and  
68 uncombed  
69 and he was  
70 barefoot

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71 in undershirt  
72 and pants.  
73 but his eyes  
74 were  
75 bright.  
76 they blazed  
77 with  
78 brightness  
79 and he said,  
80 "hey, little  
81 gentlemen,  
82 having a good  
83 time, I  
84 hope?"

85 then he gave a  
86 little laugh  
87 and walked  
88 back into the  
89 house.

90 we left,  
91 went back to my  
92 parents' yard  
93 and thought  
94 about it.

95 our parents,  
96 we decided,  
97 had wanted us  
98 to stay away  
99 from there  
100 because they  
101 never wanted us

102 to see a man  
103 like  
104 that,  
105 a strong natural  
106 man  
107 with

[Page 47]

108 beautiful  
109 eyes.

110 our parents  
111 were ashamed  
112 that they were  
113 not  
114 like that  
115 man,  
116 that's why they  
117 wanted us  
118 to stay  
119 away.

120 but  
121 we went back  
122 to that house  
123 and the bamboo  
124 and the tame  
125 goldfish.  
126 we went back  
127 many times  
128 for many  
129 weeks  
130 but we never  
131 saw  
132 or heard  
133 the man  
134 again.

135 the shades were  
136 down  
137 as always  
138 and it was  
139 quiet.

140 then one day  
141 as we came back from  
142 school

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143 we saw the  
144 house.

145 it had burned

146 down,  
147 there was nothing  
148 left,  
149 just a smoldering  
150 twisted black  
151 foundation  
152 and we went to  
153 the fish pond  
154 and there was  
155 no water  
156 in it  
157 and the fat  
158 orange goldfish  
159 were dead  
160 there,  
161 drying out.

162 we went back to  
163 my parents' yard  
164 and talked about  
165 it  
166 and decided that  
167 our parents had  
168 burned their  
169 house down,  
170 had killed  
171 them  
172 had killed the  
173 goldfish  
174 because it was  
175 all too  
176 beautiful,  
177 even the bamboo  
178 forest had  
179 burned.

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180 they had been  
181 afraid of  
182 the man with the  
183 beautiful  
184 eyes.

185 and  
186 we were afraid  
187 then  
188 that  
189 all throughout our lives  
190 things like that  
191 would  
192 happen,  
193 that nobody  
194 wanted  
195 anybody  
196 to be

197 strong and  
198 beautiful  
199 like that,  
200 that  
201 others would never  
202 allow it,  
203 and that  
204 many people  
205 would have to  
206 die.

[Page 50]

Bukowski, Charles: a strange day [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 it was one of those hot and tiring days at Hollywood  
2 Park  
3 with a huge crowd, a  
4 tiring, rude, dumb  
5 crowd.

6 I won the last race and stayed to collect and when I  
7 got to my car  
8 there was a massive jam of traffic attempting to  
9 work its way out of there.

10 so I took my shoes off, sat and waited, turned on the  
11 radio, lucked onto some classical music, found  
12 a pint of Scotch in the glove compartment, un-  
13 capped it, had a  
14 hit.

15 I'm going to let them all get out of here, I  
16 thought, then I'll  
17 go.

18 I found ¾'s of a cigar, lit it, had another hit  
19 of Scotch.

20 I listened to the music, smoked, drank the  
21 Scotch and watched the losers  
22 leave.

23 there was even a little crap game going  
24 about 100 yards to the  
25 east

26           then that  
27           broke up.

28           I decided to finish the  
29           pint.

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30           I did, then stretched out on the  
31           seat.

32           I don't know how long I  
33           slept  
34           but when I awakened it was dark and  
35           the parking lot was  
36           empty.

37           I decided not to put on my shoes, started the car  
38           and drove out of  
39           there....

40           when I got back to my place I could hear the phone  
41           ringing.

42           as I put the key in the door and opened it,  
43           the phone kept  
44           ringing.

45           I walked over, picked up the  
46           phone.

47           "hello?"

48           "you son of a bitch, where have you  
49           been?"

50           "the racetrack."

51           "the racetrack? it's 12:30 a.m.! I've been  
52           phoning since  
53           7 p.m.!"

54           "I just got in from the  
55           racetrack."

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56 "you got some woman  
57 there?"

58 "no."

59 "I don't believe you!"  
60 she hung up.

61 I walked to the refrigerator, got a beer, went to  
62 the bathroom, let the water run in the  
63 tub.  
64 I finished the beer, got another, opened it and  
65 climbed into the  
66 tub.

67 the phone rang  
68 again.

69 I got out of the tub with my beer and  
70 dripping away  
71 I walked to the phone, picked it  
72 up.

73 "hello?"

74 "you son of a bitch, I still don't  
75 believe you!"

76 she hung up.

77 I walked back to the tub with my beer,  
78 leaving another trail of  
79 water.

80 as I got back into the tub  
81 the phone rang  
82 again.

83 I let it ring, counting the  
84 rings: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,

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85 10,11,12,13,14,15,  
86 16 ...

87           she hung up.

88           then, perhaps, 3 or 4 minutes  
89           passed.

90           the phone rang  
91           again.

92           I counted the rings:  
93           1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,  
94           9 ...

95           then it was  
96           quiet.

97           about then I remembered I had  
98           left my shoes in the  
99           car.  
100          no matter, except I only had  
101          one pair.

102          chances were, though, that nobody  
103          would ever want to steal that  
104          car.

105          I got out of the tub for another  
106          beer,  
107          leaving another trail  
108          behind me.

109          it was the end of a  
110          long  
111          long  
112          day.

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Bukowski, Charles:Trollius and trellises [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems  
(1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           of course, I may die in the next ten minutes  
2           and I'm ready for that  
3           but what I'm really worried about is  
4           that my editor-publisher might retire

5           even though he is ten years younger than  
6           I.  
7           it was just 25 years ago (I was at that ripe  
8           old age of 45)  
9           when we began our unholy alliance to  
10          test the literary waters,  
11          neither of us being much  
12          known.

13          I think we had some luck and still have some  
14          of same  
15          yet  
16          the odds are pretty fair  
17          that he will opt for warm and pleasant  
18          afternoons  
19          in the garden  
20          long before I.

21          writing is its own intoxication  
22          while publishing and editing,  
23          attempting to collect bills  
24          carries its own  
25          attrition  
26          which also includes dealing with the  
27          petty bitchings and demands  
28          of many  
29          so-called genius darlings who are  
30          not.

31          I won't blame him for getting  
32          out  
33          and hope he sends me photos of his  
34          Rose Lane, his  
35          Gardenia Avenue.

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36          will I have to seek other  
37          promulgators?  
38          that fellow in the Russian  
39          fur hat?  
40          or that beast in the East  
41          with all that hair  
42          in his ears, with those wet and  
43          greasy lips?

44          or will my editor-publisher  
45          upon exiting for that world of Trollius and  
46          trellis  
47          hand over the  
48          machinery  
49          of his former trade to a  
50          cousin, a  
51          daughter or



52           some Poundian from Big  
53           Sur?

54           or will he just pass the legacy on  
55           to the  
56           Shipping Clerk  
57           who will rise like  
58           Lazarus,  
59           fingering new-found  
60           importance?

61           one can imagine terrible  
62           things:  
63           "Mr. Chinaski, all your work  
64           must now be submitted in  
65           Rondo form  
66           and  
67           typed  
68           triple-spaced on rice  
69           paper."

70           power corrupts,  
71           life aborts

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72           and all you  
73           have left  
74           is a  
75           bunch of  
76           warts.

77           "no, no, Mr. Chinaski:  
78           Rondo form!"

79           "hey, man," I'll ask,  
80           "haven't you heard of  
81           the thirties?"

82           "the thirties? what's  
83           that?"

84           my present editor-publisher  
85           and I  
86           at times  
87           did discuss the thirties,  
88           the Depression  
89           and  
90           some of the little tricks it  
91           taught us---  
92           like how to endure on almost  
93           nothing  
94           and move forward

95           anyhow.

96           well, John, if it happens enjoy your  
97           divertissement to  
98           plant husbandry,  
99           cultivate and aerate  
100          between  
101          bushes, water only in the  
102          early morning, spread  
103          shredding to discourage  
104          weed growth  
105          and  
106          as I do in my writing:

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107          use plenty of  
108          manure.

109          and thank you  
110          for locating me there at  
111          5124 DeLongpre Avenue  
112          somewhere between  
113          alcoholism and  
114          madness.

115          together we  
116          laid down the gauntlet  
117          and there are takers  
118          even at this late date  
119          still to be  
120          found  
121          as the fire sings  
122          through the  
123          trees.

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Bukowski, Charles: air and light and time and space [from *The Last Night of the Earth Poems* (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           "---you know, I've either had a family, a job, something  
2           has always been in the  
3           way  
4           but now  
5           I've sold my house, I've found this  
6           place, a large studio, you should see the space and  
7           the light.  
8           for the first time in my life I'm going to have a place and the  
time to  
9           create."

10 no baby, if you're going to create  
11 you're going to create whether you work  
12 16 hours a day in a coal mine  
13 or  
14 you're going to create in a small room with 3 children  
15 while you're on  
16 welfare,  
17 you're going to create with part of your mind and your  
18 body blown  
19 away,  
20 you're going to create blind  
21 crippled  
22 demented,  
23 you're going to create with a cat crawling up your  
24 back while  
25 the whole city trembles in earthquake, bombardment,  
26 flood and fire.

27 baby, air and light and time and space  
28 have nothing to do with it  
29 and don't create anything  
30 except maybe a longer life to find  
31 new excuses  
32 for.

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Bukowski, Charles: the eagle of the heart--- [from The Last Night of the Earth  
Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 what will they be writing about 2,000 years from  
2 now  
3 if they are  
4 here?

5 now  
6 I drink cabernet sauvignon while  
7 listening to  
8 Bach: it's  
9 most curious: this  
10 continuing death  
11 this  
12 continuing life

13 as  
14 I look at this hand  
15 holding a cigarette  
16 I feel as if  
17 I have been here

18            forever.  
  
19            now  
20            troops with bayonets  
21            sack  
22            the town below.  
23            my dog, Tony, smiles at  
24            me.

25            it is well  
26            to feel good  
27            for no reason;  
28            or  
29            with a limited  
30            choice to  
31            choose  
32            anyhow;  
33            or with a little love,

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34            not to buckle to  
35            hatred.  
36            faith, brother, not in the  
37            gods  
38            but in  
39            yourself:  
40            don't ask,  
41            tell.

42            I tell you  
43            such fine  
44            music  
45            waits  
46            in the  
47            shadows  
48            of  
49            hell.

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Bukowski, Charles: bright red car [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1            I try to avoid speed duels on the freeway but the most curious  
thing  
2            is  
3            that all my speeding tickets are when I am quietly driving along on

4 my  
5 own.

6 when I am in a high speed duel, darting in and out of lanes  
7 at near 100 m.p.h.  
8 the police are never  
9 about.

10 when I get tagged for speeding it is for cruising along,  
11 day-dreaming, at a mere 70  
12 m.p.h.

13 I received 3 such nonsensical tickets in 3 weeks so  
14 I laid low for some time---2 years, in fact, but today  
15 out there  
16 there was a fellow in a bright red car, I have no idea what  
17 model or kind  
18 and I have no idea of how it all started but I believe that  
19 I started it:  
20 I was in the fast lane going about 70  
21 and I caught the flash of bright red in my rear view and  
22 as he swung out to pass me on the right  
23 he was doing 75  
24 and there was time for him to pass  
25 then cut into the fast lane ahead of me  
26 but something made me hit the throttle and cut him  
27 off  
28 locking him in behind an old lady with a CHRIST  
29 SAVES bumper sticker.  
30 this seemed to piss him no end  
31 and next I knew he had swung over on my bumper,  
32 so close that his windshield and my taillights  
33 seemed one.

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34 this pissed me no end and I was being blocked by a  
35 green Volks directly ahead  
36 but I cut right through an opening and shot  
37 ahead.  
38 bright red went wild, spotted the far lane open,  
39 roared over and gunned it  
40 along.

41 after that, it was just me and bright red  
42 jockeying for spots.

43 he would garner a lead, then with a crazy gamble  
44 of lane change I would regain the  
45 lead.

46 during this duel my destination was forgotten and I'm

47           sure his was  
48           too.

49           watching him, I couldn't help but admire his driving  
50           skill; he took a few more chances than I  
51           but I had a little bit the better machine  
52           so it  
53           just about evened out.

54           then  
55           suddenly  
56           we were alone: a freak break in the traffic  
57           had set us free together  
58           and we really opened  
59           up.

60           he had a short lead but my machine slowly gained; I  
61           inched up near him,  
62           then I was at his side and I couldn't help but  
63           look over.

64           he was a young Japanese-American, maybe 18, 19  
65           and I looked at him and  
66           laughed.

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67           I saw him check me out.  
68           he saw a 70 year old white man  
69           with a face like  
70           Frankenstein.

71           the young man took his foot off the throttle and  
72           dropped back.

73           I let him go.

74           I turned the radio  
75           on.

76           I was 18 miles past my destination but it  
77           didn't matter.

78           it was a beautiful sunny day.

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Bukowski, Charles: moving toward the 21st century [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           it was a New Year's Eve party at my place  
2           I think.  
3           I was standing holding a drink when  
4           this slender young fellow walked up  
5           he was a bit drunk he said

6           "Hank, I met a woman who said  
7           she was married to you for 2  
8           years."

9           "really?  
10          what was her  
11          name?"

12          "Lola  
13          Edwards."

14          "never heard of  
15          her."

16          "ah, come on, man, she  
17          said ..."

18          "don't know her,  
19          baby ..."

20          in fact I didn't know who  
21          he was ...

22          I drained my drink walked to the kitchen  
23          poured a refill

24          I looked around yes, I was at my place  
25          I recognized the  
26          kitchen.

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27          another  
28          Happy New Year.

29            Jesus.

30            I walked out to face the  
31            people.

[Page 66]

Bukowski, Charles:the lady and the mountain lion [from The Last Night of the  
Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1            it was hardly a wilderness area  
2            but it was countryside  
3            and there had been a paucity of  
4            rainfall---also some housing  
5            construction on the  
6            hillsides.

7            small game was dying  
8            out.  
9            the coyotes were the first of  
10           the famished to  
11           arrive  
12           looking for  
13           chickens  
14           cats  
15           anything.

16           in fact, a group attacked  
17           a man on horseback  
18           tearing his arm  
19           but he  
20           escaped.

21           then  
22           in a park  
23           there was the lady who  
24           left her car to  
25           go to the public  
26           restroom.

27           she had closed the stall  
28           door  
29           when she heard a  
30           soft  
31           sound,  
32           the stealth of

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33 padded  
34 feet.

35 then  
36 as she sat there  
37 the mountain lion stuck  
38 his head under the  
39 stall door.

40 a truly beautiful  
41 animal.

42 then  
43 the head withdrew, the cat  
44 knocked over a trash can, circled,  
45 emitted a slow  
46 growl.

47 the lady climbed up  
48 on the toilet  
49 then grasped an overhead  
50 pipe  
51 and  
52 swung herself completely up  
53 (fear creates abnormal  
54 acts) and sat where  
55 she could watch  
56 the cat.

57 at once  
58 the cat put his  
59 paws up  
60 on the wash basin  
61 stuck his head in  
62 there  
63 and lapped at a dripping  
64 spigot.

65 then  
66 he sank

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67 low upon the floor  
68 crouched  
69 facing the doorway

70 then  
71 zing  
72 was gone  
73 out of there.

74           then  
75           at last  
76           the lady began  
77           screaming.

78           when the people  
79           arrived  
80           the cat was nowhere to be  
81           seen.

82           the story made the  
83           newspapers and the television  
84           stations.

85           the story that won't be told is  
86           that the lady  
87           will never go to the bathroom  
88           again  
89           without thinking of a  
90           mountain  
91           lion.

92           a truly beautiful  
93           animal.

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Bukowski, Charles:a laugh a minute [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems  
(1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           come on, let's go see him, this old guy is a  
2           kick in the ass, 50 years old, he sits around  
3           in his shorts and underwear  
4           drinking wine out of this chipped white  
5           cup.  
6           he sits with the shades pulled down and  
7           he's never owned a tv set.  
8           the only time he goes out is for more  
9           wine  
10          or to the racetrack in his baby blue  
11          '58 Comet.

12          you get there and he's distraught, some woman  
13          has always left forever and  
14          he pretends to play it with bravado but  
15          his little slit eyes are filled with  
16          pain.

17 he'll pour drinks all around, he just gulps  
18 that crap down and then sometimes he'll  
19 get up and puke.  
20 it's really something. you  
21 can hear him for blocks.  
22 then he'll come out and pour another  
23 drink.  
24 he'll go on and on drinking  
25 and then once in a while he'll say something  
26 crazy like, "anything 3 dogs can do, 4 dogs  
27 can do better!"  
28 other things too.  
29 or he'll smash a glass or a bottle against  
30 the wall.

31 he worked as an orderly in a  
32 hospital for 15 years  
33 then quit.

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34 he never sleeps at night.

35 and for a guy that ugly  
36 I don't see how he gets all his  
37 women.  
38 and he's jealous.  
39 just look at one of his women  
40 and he'll swing on you.

41 then he gets drunk and tells crazy  
42 stories and sings.  
43 and guess what? he writes  
44 poetry.

45 come on, let's go see him, this old guy  
46 is a kick in the  
47 ass!

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Bukowski, Charles:hello, Hamsun [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1 after two-and-one-half bottles  
2 that have not strengthened my saddened  
3 heart

4 walking from this drunken

5 darkness  
6 toward the bedroom  
7 thinking of Hamsun who  
8 ate his own flesh to  
9 gain time to  
10 write

11 I trundle into the other  
12 room  
13 an old  
14 man

15 a hellfish in the night  
16 swimming upward  
17 sideways  
18 down.

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Bukowski, Charles: death is smoking my cigars [from The Last Night of the Earth  
Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 you know: I'm drunk once again  
2 here  
3 listening to Tchaikovsky  
4 on the radio.  
5 Jesus, I heard him 47 years  
6 ago  
7 when I was a starving writer  
8 and here he is  
9 again  
10 and now I am a minor success as  
11 a writer  
12 and death is walking  
13 up and down  
14 this room  
15 smoking my cigars  
16 taking hits of my  
17 wine  
18 as Tchaik is working away  
19 at the Pathétique,  
20 it's been some journey  
21 and any luck I've had was  
22 because I rolled the dice  
23 right:  
24 I starved for my art, I starved to  
25 gain 5 god-damned minutes, 5 hours,  
26 5 days---  
27 I just wanted to get the word  
28 down;  
29 fame, money, didn't matter:  
30 I wanted the word down

31 and they wanted me at a punch press,  
32 a factory assembly line  
33 they wanted me to be a stock boy in a  
34 department store.

35 well, death says, as he walks by,  
36 I'm going to get you anyhow

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37 no matter what you've been:  
38 writer, cab-driver, pimp, butcher,  
39 sky-diver, I'm going to get  
40 you ...

41 o.k. baby, I tell him.

42 we drink together now  
43 as one a.m. slides to 2  
44 a.m. and  
45 only he knows the  
46 moment, but I worked a con  
47 on him: I got my  
48 5 god-damned minutes  
49 and much  
50 more.

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Bukowski, Charles:hock shops [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1 were always all right with me  
2 because when I tried to sell something in the street  
3 there were no takers.

4 of course, the shops offered far less than real value;  
5 they had to profit on the  
6 resale,  
7 but at least, they were  
8 there.

9 my favorite shop was a place in Los Angeles---  
10 this fellow would lead me to a booth where  
11 he would gather a black curtain all around  
12 us,  
13 it slid on little rings  
14 and then  
15 we would be enclosed.

16 and it always went like  
17 this:

18 "show me," he would  
19 say.

20 I would place the item on the table under  
21 the very strong  
22 light.

23 he would examine the item, then look at me  
24 for some time.

25 "I can't give you very much for  
26 this."

27 another pause, then he would name his  
28 price.

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29 the offer was always more than I  
30 expected.

31 "I'll take \$10," I would name a  
32 higher price.

33 "no," he would answer, "in fact ..."  
34 and then he would mention a lower price  
35 than his original  
36 offer.

37 at times I would attempt to joke with  
38 him:

39 "if I stay here long enough, I'll be  
40 paying you ..."

41 he wouldn't smile.

42 "we don't have to do business at  
43 all."

44 "listen, I'll accept your first

45           offer ..."

46           "very well," he would say,  
47           "but I will lose on  
48           this ..."

49           then he would write out the  
50           pawn ticket and give me the  
51           money.

52           "please be sure to read your ticket,  
53           there are  
54           stipulations."

55           then he would turn off the light  
56           and pull the black curtain  
57           away ...

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58           sometimes I was able to retrieve one  
59           of the items  
60           but eventually they all returned  
61           forever.

62           also, I found out that the one thing  
63           you could sell in the bars and on the  
64           street were  
65           hock shop tickets.

66           the hock shops helped me through some terrible  
67           times and I was glad they were  
68           there when nothing else  
69           was, and that booth with the black  
70           curtain: what a marvelous sanctuary,  
71           a place to give up something for  
72           something else that you needed  
73           much more.

74           how many typewriters, suits, gloves and  
75           watches I left in the hock shops  
76           I have no  
77           idea,  
78           but those places were always  
79           all right  
80           with me.

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Bukowski, Charles:hell is a closed door [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           even when starving  
2           the rejection slips hardly ever bothered me:  
3           I only believed that the editors were  
4           truly stupid  
5           and I just went on and wrote more and  
6           more.  
7           I even considered rejects as  
8           action; the worst was the empty  
9           mailbox.

10          if I had a weakness or a dream  
11          it was  
12          that I only wanted to see one of these  
13          editors  
14          who rejected me,  
15          to see his or her face, the way they  
16          dressed, the way they walked across a  
17          room, the sound of their voice, the look  
18          in their eye ...  
19          just one look at one of  
20          them---

21          you see, when all you look at is  
22          a piece of printed paper  
23          telling you that you  
24          aren't very good,  
25          then there is a tendency  
26          to think that the editors  
27          are more god-like than  
28          they are.

29          hell is a closed door  
30          when you're starving for your god-  
31          damned art  
32          but sometimes you feel at least like having a  
33          peek through the  
34          keyhole.

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35          young or old, good or bad,  
36          I don't think anything dies as slow and  
37          as hard as a  
38          writer.

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Bukowski, Charles: pulled down shade [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1            what I like about you  
2            she told me  
3            is that you're crude---  
4            look at you sitting there  
5            a beer can in your hand  
6            and a cigar in your mouth  
7            and look at  
8            your dirty hairy belly  
9            sticking out from  
10          under your shirt.  
11          you've got your shoes off  
12          and you've got a hole  
13          in your right stocking  
14          with the big toe  
15          sticking out.  
16          you haven't shaved in  
17          4 or 5 days.  
18          your teeth are yellow  
19          and your eyebrows  
20          hang down  
21          all twisted  
22          and you've got enough  
23          scars  
24          to scare the shit  
25          out of anybody.  
26          there's always  
27          a ring  
28          in your bathtub  
29          your telephone  
30          is covered with  
31          grease  
32          and  
33          half the crap in  
34          your refrigerator is  
35          rotten.  
36          you never  
37          wash your car.

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38          you've got newspapers  
39          a week old  
40          on the floor.  
41          you read dirty  
42          magazines  
43          and you don't have  
44          a tv  
45          but you order  
46          deliveries from the  
47          liquor store  
48          and you tip  
49          good.  
50          and best of all

51       you don't push  
52       a woman to  
53       go to bed  
54       with you.  
55       you seem hardly  
56       interested  
57       and when I talk to you  
58       you don't  
59       say anything  
60       you just  
61       look around  
62       the room or  
63       scratch your  
64       neck  
65       like you don't  
66       hear me.  
67       you've got an old  
68       wet towel in  
69       the sink  
70       and a photo of  
71       Mussolini  
72       on the wall  
73       and you never  
74       complain  
75       about anything  
76       and you never  
77       ask questions

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78       and I've  
79       known you for  
80       6 months  
81       but I have  
82       no idea  
83       who you are.  
84       you're like  
85       some  
86       pulled down shade  
87       but that's what  
88       I like about  
89       you:  
90       your crudeness:  
91       a woman can  
92       drop  
93       out of your  
94       life and  
95       forget you  
96       real fast.  
97       a woman  
98       can't go anywhere  
99       but UP  
100      after  
101      leaving you,  
102      honey.  
103      you've got to  
104      be  
105      the best thing  
106      that ever  
107      happened

108 to  
109 a girl  
110 who's between  
111 one guy  
112 and the next  
113 and has nothing  
114 to do  
115 at the moment.  
116 this fucking

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117 Scotch is  
118 great.  
119 let's play  
120 Scrabble.

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Bukowski, Charles: before Aids [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1 I'm glad I got to them  
2 all, I'm glad I got so many of them  
3 in.

4 I flipped them  
5 poked them  
6 gored them.

7 so many high-heeled shoes  
8 under my bed  
9 it looked like a January  
10 Clearance Sale.

11 the cheap hotel rooms,  
12 the drunken fights,  
13 the phones ringing,  
14 the walls banging

15 I was  
16 wild  
17 red-eyed  
18 big-balled  
19 unshaven  
20 poor  
21 foul-mouthed  
22 I laughed  
23 plenty

24           and I picked them off  
25           the barstools  
26           like  
27           ripe plums.

28           dirty sheets  
29           bad whiskey  
30           bad breath  
31           cheap cigars

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32           and to hell with the next  
33           morning.

34           I always slept with my  
35           wallet under my  
36           pillow  
37           bedded down with the  
38           depressed and the  
39           crazies.

40           I was barred from half the  
41           hotels in  
42           Los Angeles.

43           I'm glad I got to them all,  
44           I plugged and banged and  
45           sang and  
46           some of them  
47           sang with me  
48           on those glorious  
49           3 a.m. mornings.  
50           when the cops  
51           arrived, that was  
52           grand,  
53           we barricaded the doors  
54           and taunted  
55           them  
56           and they never waited around  
57           until noon  
58           (checking-out time) to  
59           arrest us,  
60           we weren't that  
61           important

62           but  
63           I thought we were  
64           walking toward the bar,  
65           and what a place the bar was  
66           around noon, so quiet and  
67           empty,

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68           a place to begin  
69           again,  
70           to buck up with a quiet  
71           beer,  
72           looking out across at the  
73           park  
74           with the ducks over there  
75           and the tall trees  
76           over there.

77           so,  
78           always broke but always  
79           money from somewhere,  
80           I waited  
81           getting ready to  
82           plug and bang and poke  
83           and sing again  
84           in those good old times  
85           in those very very very  
86           good old times  
87           before Aids.

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Bukowski, Charles:hunk of rock [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           Nina was the hardest of them  
2           all,  
3           the worst woman I had known  
4           up to that moment  
5           and I was sitting in front of  
6           my secondhand black and white  
7           tv  
8           watching the news  
9           when I heard a suspicious  
10          sound in the kitchen  
11          and I ran out there  
12          and saw her with  
13          a full bottle of whiskey---  
14          a 5th---  
15          and she had it and  
16          was headed for the back porch  
17          door  
18          but I caught her and  
19          grabbed at the bottle.  
20          "give me that bottle, you  
21          fucking whore!"  
22          and we wrestled for the  
23          bottle  
24          and let me tell you  
25          she gave me a good fight

26           for it  
27           but  
28           I got it away from her  
29           and I told her to  
30           get her ass out of  
31           there.  
32           she lived in the same place  
33           in the back  
34           upstairs.

35           I locked the door  
36           took the bottle and a

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37           glass  
38           went out to the couch  
39           sat down and  
40           opened the bottle and  
41           poured myself a good  
42           one.

43           I shut off the tv and  
44           sat there  
45           thinking about what a  
46           hard number  
47           Nina was.  
48           I came up with  
49           at least  
50           a dozen lousy things  
51           she had done  
52           to me.

53           what a whore.  
54           what a hunk of rock.

55           I sat there drinking  
56           the whiskey  
57           and wondering  
58           what I was doing  
59           with Nina.

60           then there was a  
61           knock on the  
62           door.  
63           it was Nina's friend,  
64           Helga.

65           "where's Nina?"  
66           she asked.

67           "she tried to steal  
68           my whiskey, I

69 ran her ass  
70 out of here."

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71 "she said to meet  
72 her here."

73 "what for?"

74 "she said me and her  
75 were going to do it  
76 in front of you  
77 for \$50."

78 "\$25."

79 "she said \$50."

80 "well, she's not  
81 here ... want a  
82 drink?"

83 "sure ..."

84 I got Helga a glass  
85 poured her a  
86 whiskey.  
87 she took a  
88 hit.

89 "maybe," she said,  
90 "I ought to go get  
91 Nina."

92 "I don't want to see  
93 her."

94 "why not?"

95 "she's a whore."

96 Helga finished her  
97 drink and I poured  
98 her another.

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99           she took a  
100          hit.

101          "Benny calls me a  
102          whore, I'm no  
103          whore."

104          Benny was the guy  
105          she was shackled  
106          with.

107          "I know you're no  
108          whore, Helga."

109          "thanks. Ain't ya got no  
110          music?"

111          "just the radio ..."

112          she saw it  
113          got up  
114          turned it  
115          on.  
116          some music came  
117          blaring out.

118          Helga began to  
119          dance  
120          holding her whiskey  
121          glass in one  
122          hand.  
123          she wasn't a good  
124          dancer  
125          she looked  
126          ridiculous.

127          she stopped  
128          drained her drink  
129          rolled her glass along the  
130          rug

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131          then ran toward  
132          me  
133          dropped to her knees  
134          unzipped me  
135          and then  
136          she was down  
137          there



138        doing tricks.

139        I drained my  
140        drink  
141        poured another.

142        she was  
143        good.  
144        she had a college  
145        degree  
146        some place back  
147        East.

148        "get it, Helga, get  
149        it!"

150        there was a loud  
151        knock  
152        on the front  
153        door.

154        "HANK, IS HELGA  
155        THERE?"

156        "WHO?"

157        "HELGA!"

158        "JUST A MINUTE!"

159        "THIS IS NINA, I WAS  
160        SUPPOSED TO MEET  
161        HELGA HERE, WE HAVE A

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162        LITTLE SURPRISE FOR  
163        YOU!"

164        "YOU TRIED TO STEAL  
165        MY WHISKEY, YOU  
166        WHORE!"

167        "HANK, LET ME  
168        IN!"

169        "get it, Helga, get  
170        it!"

171 "HANK!"

172 "Helga, you fucking whore ...  
173 Helga! Helga! Helga!!"

174 I pulled away and  
175 got up.

176 "let her in."

177 I went to the  
178 bathroom.

179 when I came out they  
180 were both sitting there  
181 drinking and smoking  
182 laughing about  
183 something.  
184 then they  
185 saw me.

186 "50 bucks," said Nina.

187 "25 bucks," I said.

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188 "we won't do it  
189 then."

190 "don't then."

191 Nina inhaled  
192 exhaled.  
193 "all right, you  
194 cheap bastard, 25  
195 bucks!"

196 Nina stood up and  
197 began taking her  
198 clothes off.

199 she was the hardest  
200 of them  
201 all.

202 Helga stood up and  
203 began taking her  
204 clothes off.

205 I poured a  
206 drink.  
207 "sometimes I wonder  
208 what the hell is  
209 going on  
210 around here," I  
211 said.

212 "don't worry about  
213 it, Daddy, just  
214 get with it!"

215 "just what am I  
216 supposed to  
217 do?"

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218 "just do  
219 whatever the fuck  
220 you feel  
221 like doing,"  
222 said Nina  
223 her big ass  
224 blazing  
225 in the  
226 lamplight.

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Bukowski, Charles:poetry [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 it  
2 takes  
3 a lot of

4 desperation

5 dissatisfaction

6           and  
7           disillusion

8           to  
9           write

10          a  
11          few  
12          good  
13          poems.

14          it's not  
15          for  
16          everybody

17          either to

18          write  
19          it

20          or even to

21          read  
22          it.

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Bukowski, Charles:dinner, 1933 [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           when my father ate  
2           his lips became  
3           greasy  
4           with food.

5           and when he ate  
6           he talked about how  
7           good  
8           the food was  
9           and that  
10          most other people  
11          didn't eat  
12          as good  
13          as we  
14          did.

15 he liked to  
16 sop up  
17 what was left  
18 on his plate  
19 with a piece of  
20 bread,  
21 meanwhile making  
22 appreciative sounds  
23 rather like  
24 half-  
25 grunts.

26 he slurped his  
27 coffee  
28 making loud  
29 bubbling  
30 sounds.  
31 then he'd put  
32 the cup  
33 down:

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34 "dessert? is it  
35 jello?"

36 my mother would  
37 bring it  
38 in a large bowl  
39 and my father would  
40 spoon it  
41 out.

42 as it plopped  
43 in the dish  
44 the jello made  
45 strange sounds,  
46 almost fart-  
47 like  
48 sounds.

49 then came the  
50 whipped cream,  
51 mounds of it  
52 on the  
53 jello.

54 "ah! jello and  
55 whipped cream!"

56 my father sucked the  
57 jello and whipped  
58 cream

59 off his spoon---  
60 it sounded as if it  
61 was entering a  
62 wind  
63 tunnel.

64 finished with  
65 that  
66 he would wipe his  
67 mouth

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68 with a huge white  
69 napkin,  
70 rubbing hard  
71 in circular  
72 motions,  
73 the napkin almost  
74 hiding his  
75 entire  
76 face.

77 after that  
78 out came the  
79 Camel  
80 cigarettes.  
81 he'd light one  
82 with a wooden  
83 kitchen match,  
84 then place the  
85 match,  
86 still burning,  
87 onto an  
88 ashtray.

89 then a slurp of  
90 coffee, the cup  
91 back down, and a good  
92 drag on the  
93 Camel.

94 "ah that was a  
95 good  
96 meal!"

97 moments later  
98 in my bedroom  
99 on my bed  
100 in the dark  
101 the food that I  
102 had eaten  
103 and what I had

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104        seen  
105        was already  
106        making me  
107        ill.  
  
108        the only good  
109        thing  
110        was  
111        listening to  
112        the crickets  
113        out there,  
114        out there  
115        in another world  
116        I didn't  
117        live  
118        in.

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Bukowski, Charles:such luck [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1            we were at this table,  
2            men and women,  
3            after dinner.  
4            somehow  
5            the conversation got  
6            around to  
7            PMS.  
8            one of the ladies  
9            stated firmly that  
10          the only cure for  
11          PMS  
12          was old  
13          age.  
14          there were other  
15          remarks  
16          that I have  
17          forgotten,  
18          except for one  
19          which came from this  
20          German guest  
21          once married,  
22          now divorced.  
23          also, I had seen  
24          him with  
25          any number of  
26          beautiful young  
27          girlfriends.  
28          anyhow, after quietly  
29          listening  
30          to our conversation

31           for some time  
32           he asked us,  
33           "what's PMS?"

34           now here was one  
35           truly touched

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36           by  
37           the angels.

38           the light was so  
39           bright  
40           we  
41           all looked  
42           away.

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Bukowski, Charles:flophouse [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           you haven't lived  
2           until you've been in a  
3           flophouse  
4           with nothing but one  
5           light bulb  
6           and 56 men  
7           squeezed together  
8           on cots  
9           with everybody  
10          snoring  
11          at once  
12          and some of those  
13          snores  
14          so  
15          deep and  
16          gross and  
17          unbelievable---  
18          dark  
19          snotty  
20          gross  
21          subhuman  
22          wheezings  
23          from hell  
24          itself.

25          your mind  
26          almost breaks  
27          under those



28 death-like  
29 sounds

30 and the  
31 intermingling  
32 odors:  
33 hard  
34 unwashed socks  
35 pissed and

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36 shitted  
37 underwear

38 and over it all  
39 slowly circulating  
40 air  
41 much like that  
42 emanating from  
43 uncovered  
44 garbage  
45 cans.

46 and those  
47 bodies  
48 in the dark

49 fat and  
50 thin  
51 and  
52 bent

53 some  
54 legless  
55 armless

56 some  
57 mindless

58 and worst of  
59 all:  
60 the total  
61 absence of  
62 hope

63 it shrouds  
64 them  
65 covers them  
66 totally.

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67        it's not  
68        bearable.

69        you get  
70        up

71        go out

72        walk the  
73        streets

74        up and  
75        down  
76        sidewalks

77        past buildings

78        around the  
79        corner

80        and back  
81        up  
82        the same  
83        street

84        thinking

85        those men  
86        were all  
87        children  
88        once

89        what has happened  
90        to  
91        them?

92        and what has  
93        happened  
94        to  
95        me?

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96        it's dark

97           and cold  
98           out  
99           here.

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Bukowski, Charles:hand-outs [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           sometimes I am hit  
2           for change  
3           3 or 4 times  
4           in twenty minutes  
5           and nine times out of  
6           ten I'll  
7           give.  
8           the time or two  
9           that I don't  
10          I have an instinctive  
11          reaction  
12          not to  
13          and I  
14          don't  
15          but mostly I  
16          dig and  
17          give  
18          but each time  
19          I can't help but  
20          remember  
21          the many times  
22          hollow-eyed  
23          my skin tight to the  
24          ribs  
25          my mind airy and  
26          mad  
27          I never asked  
28          anybody  
29          for anything  
30          and it wasn't  
31          pride  
32          it was simply because  
33          I didn't respect  
34          them  
35          didn't regard them  
36          as worthy human  
37          beings.

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38          they were the  
39          enemy  
40          and they still are  
41          as I dig  
42          in  
43          and

44           give.

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Bukowski, Charles:waiting [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           hot summers in the mid-30's in Los Angeles  
2           where every 3rd lot was vacant  
3           and it was a short ride to the orange  
4           groves---  
5           if you had a car and the  
6           gas.

7           hot summers in the mid-30's in Los Angeles  
8           too young to be a man and too old to  
9           be a boy.

10          hard times.  
11          a neighbor tried to rob our  
12          house, my father caught him  
13          climbing through the  
14          window,  
15          held him there in the dark  
16          on the floor:  
17          "you rotten son of a  
18          bitch!"

19          "Henry, Henry, let me go,  
20          let me go!"

21          "you son of a bitch, I'll kill  
22          you!"

23          my mother phoned the police.

24          another neighbor set his house on fire  
25          in an attempt to collect the  
26          insurance.  
27          he was investigated and  
28          jailed.

29          hot summers in the mid-30's in Los Angeles,  
30          nothing to do, nowhere to go, listening to

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31 the terrified talk of our parents  
32 at night:  
33 "what will we do? what will we  
34 do?"

35 "god, I don't know ..."

36 starving dogs in the alleys, skin taut  
37 across ribs, hair falling out, tongues  
38 out, such sad eyes, sadder than any sadness  
39 on earth.

40 hot summers in the mid-30's in Los Angeles,  
41 the men of the neighborhood were quiet  
42 and the women were like pale  
43 statues.

44 the parks full of socialists,  
45 communists, anarchists, standing on the park  
46 benches, orating, agitating.

47 the sun came down through a clear sky and  
48 the ocean was clean  
49 and we were  
50 neither men nor  
51 boys.

52 we fed the dogs leftover pieces of dry hard  
53 bread  
54 which they ate gratefully,  
55 eyes shining in  
56 wonder,  
57 tails waving at such  
58 luck

59 as  
60 World War II moved toward us,  
61 even then, during those  
62 hot summers in the mid-30's in Los Angeles.

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Bukowski, Charles: those mornings [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1 I still remember those New Orleans rats

2 out on the balcony railings  
3 in the dark of early morning  
4 as I stood waiting my turn at the  
5 crapper.  
6 there were always two or three  
7 big ones  
8 just sitting there---sometimes they'd  
9 move quickly then  
10 stop and sit there.  
11 I looked at them and they looked at  
12 me.  
13 they showed no fear.

14 at last the crapper door would open  
15 and out would walk  
16 one of the tenants  
17 and he always looked worse than  
18 the rats  
19 and then he'd be gone  
20 down the hallway  
21 and I'd go into the still-  
22 stinking crapper  
23 with my hangover.

24 and almost always  
25 when I came out  
26 the rats would be gone.  
27 as soon as it got a little light  
28 they would  
29 vanish.

30 and then  
31 the world would be  
32 mine,  
33 I'd walk down the stairway  
34 and into it

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35 and my low-wage  
36 pitiful  
37 job  
38 while remembering the  
39 rats,  
40 how it was better for them  
41 than for  
42 me.

43 I walked to work as the sun  
44 came up hot  
45 and the whores slept  
46 like  
47 babies.

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Bukowski, Charles:everything you touch [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           putting on your torn clothes in an old New Orleans roominghouse,  
2           you and your stockboy soul,  
3           then rolling your little green wagon past the salesgirls who  
4           took no notice of you, those girls dreaming of bigger  
5           game with their tiny rectangular  
6           brains.

7           or in Los Angeles, coming in from your shipping clerk job at  
8           an auto parts warehouse, taking the elevator up to 319 to find  
9           your woman sprawled out on the bed, drunk at  
10          6 p.m.

11          you were never any good at picking them, you always got the  
12          leftovers, the crazies, the alkie, the pill-freaks.  
13          maybe that was all you could get and maybe you were all they  
14          could get.

15          you went to the bars and found more alkie, pill-freaks, crazies.  
16          all they had to show you were a pair of well-turned ankles in  
17          spike-heeled shoes.  
18          you thumped up and down on beds with them as if you had  
19          discovered  
20          the meaning of  
21          existence.

22          then there was this day at work when Larry the salesman came  
23          down the  
24          aisle with his big belly and his little button eyes, Larry always  
25          walked loudly on leather-soled shoes and he was almost always  
26          whistling.

27          he stopped whistling and stood at your shipping table as you  
28          worked.

29          then he began rocking back and forth, he had this habit and  
30          he stood there rocking, observing you, he was one of those jokers,  
31          you

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32          know, and then he began laughing, you were sick from a long crazy  
33          night, needed a shave, you were dressed in a torn shirt.

34          "what is it, Larry?" you asked.

35           and then he said, "Hank, everything you touch turns to shit!"

36           you couldn't argue with him about that.

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Bukowski, Charles:car wash [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           got out, fellow said, "hey!" walked toward  
2           me, we shook hands, he slipped me 2 red  
3           tickets for free car washes, "find you later,"  
4           I told him, walked on through to waiting  
5           area with wife, we sat on outside bench.  
6           black fellow with a limp came up, said,  
7           "hey, man, how's it going?"  
8           I answered, "fine, bro, you makin' it?"  
9           "no problem," he said, then walked off to  
10          dry down a Caddy.  
11          "these people know you?" my wife asked.  
12          "no."  
13          "how come they talk to you?"  
14          "they like me, people have always liked me,  
15          it's my cross."  
16          then our car was finished, fellow flipped  
17          his rag at me, we got up, got to the  
18          car, I slipped him a buck, we got in, I  
19          started the engine, the foreman walked  
20          up, big guy with dark shades, huge guy,  
21          he smiled a big one, "good to see you,  
22          man!"  
23          I smiled back, "thanks, but it's your party,  
24          man!"  
25          I pulled out into traffic, "they know you,"  
26          said my wife.  
27          "sure," I said, "I've been there."

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Bukowski, Charles:the flashing of the odds [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           parking lot attendant, Bobby, was funny,  
2           wise-cracking, laughing, was  
3           good at it, he was an original,



4           sometimes when I was down  
5           listening to Bobby brought me back  
6           up.

7           didn't see him for 3 weeks, asked the  
8           other attendants but they didn't know  
9           or made things up.

10          drove in today and there was  
11          Bobby, his uniform wrinkled, he was just  
12          standing there while the others  
13          worked.

14          approached him and he seemed to  
15          recognize me, then spoke: "got all  
16          stressed out driving here, it took me  
17          3 hours!"

18          he wasn't laughing, had grown suddenly  
19          fat, his belt buckle was  
20          unfastened, I buckled him up, he  
21          had a 3 day beard,  
22          his  
23          hair was grey, his face wrinkled, his  
24          eyes stuck in a backwash, 20 years  
25          lost in 3 weeks.

26          "good to see you, Bobby."

27          "yeah, sure, when you going to buy  
28          this place?"

29          he was talking about the  
30          racetrack.

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31          I walked across the lot and into  
32          the track, took the escalator  
33          up, reached the top floor, walked  
34          toward the service stand.  
35          Betty saw me and got my coffee  
36          poured.

37          "you ready for a big day?"  
38          she asked.

39          "I'm ready for any kind of  
40          day."

41 "you come here to win, don't  
42 you?"

43 "I come here not to  
44 lose."

45 I took my coffee to a seat  
46 facing the toteboard.  
47 the odds flashed, I sat down  
48 spilling hot coffee  
49 on my  
50 hand.

51 "shit," I said.

52 and the day went  
53 on.

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Bukowski, Charles:poetry contest [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1 send as many poems as you wish, only  
2 keep each to a maximum of ten lines.  
3 no limit as to style or content  
4 although we prefer poems of  
5 affirmation.  
6 double space  
7 with your name and address in the  
8 upper left hand  
9 corner.  
10 editors not responsible for  
11 manuscripts  
12 without an s.a.s.e.  
13 every effort  
14 will be made to  
15 judge all works within 90  
16 days.  
17 after careful screening  
18 the final choices will be made by  
19 Elly May Moody,  
20 general editor in charge.  
21 please enclose ten dollars for  
22 each poem  
23 submitted.  
24 a final grand prize of  
25 seventy-five dollars will

26 be awarded the winner  
27 of the  
28 Elly May Moody Golden Poetry  
29 Award,  
30 along with a scroll  
31 signed by  
32 Elly May Moody.  
33 there will also be 2nd, 3rd and  
34 4th prize scrolls  
35 also signed by  
36 Elly May Moody.  
37 all decisions will be

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38 final.  
39 the prize winners will  
40 appear in the Spring issue of  
41 The Heart of Heaven.  
42 prize winners will also receive  
43 one copy of the magazine  
44 along with  
45 Elly May Moody's  
46 latest collection of  
47 poetry,  
48 The Place Where Winter  
49 Died.

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Bukowski, Charles: peace [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 near the corner table in the  
2 cafe  
3 a middle-aged couple  
4 sit.  
5 they have finished their  
6 meal  
7 and they are each drinking a  
8 beer.  
9 it is 9 in the evening.  
10 she is smoking a  
11 cigarette.  
12 then he says something.  
13 she nods.  
14 then she speaks.  
15 he grins, moves his  
16 hand.  
17 then they are  
18 quiet.  
19 through the blinds next to  
20 their table  
21 flashing red neon

22           blinks on and  
23           off.

24           there is no war.  
25           there is no hell.

26           then he raises his beer  
27           bottle.  
28           it is green.  
29           he lifts it to his lips,  
30           tilts it.

31           it is a coronet.

32           her right elbow is  
33           on the table

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34           and in her hand  
35           she holds the  
36           cigarette  
37           between her thumb and  
38           forefinger  
39           and  
40           as she watches  
41           him  
42           the streets outside  
43           flower  
44           in the  
45           night.

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Bukowski, Charles:the bluebird [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           there's a bluebird in my heart that  
2           wants to get out  
3           but I'm too tough for him,  
4           I say, stay in there, I'm not going  
5           to let anybody see  
6           you.

7           there's a bluebird in my heart that  
8           wants to get out  
9           but I pour whiskey on him and inhale  
10          cigarette smoke  
11          and the whores and the bartenders

12           and the grocery clerks  
13           never know that  
14           he's  
15           in there.

16           there's a bluebird in my heart that  
17           wants to get out  
18           but I'm too tough for him,  
19           I say,  
20           stay down, do you want to mess  
21           me up?  
22           you want to screw up the  
23           works?  
24           you want to blow my book sales in  
25           Europe?

26           there's a bluebird in my heart that  
27           wants to get out  
28           but I'm too clever, I only let him out  
29           at night sometimes  
30           when everybody's asleep.  
31           I say, I know that you're there,  
32           so don't be  
33           sad.

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34           then I put him back,  
35           but he's singing a little  
36           in there, I haven't quite let him  
37           die  
38           and we sleep together like  
39           that  
40           with our  
41           secret pact  
42           and it's nice enough to  
43           make a man  
44           weep, but I don't  
45           weep, do  
46           you?

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living too long  
takes more than  
time

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Bukowski, Charles:going out [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           the sweet slide of the luger  
2           toward your temple,  
3           a flight of birds winging  
4           northward,  
5           the clicking sound of the  
6           safety catch being  
7           released,  
8           the eclipse of the  
9           sun,  
10          the sound of something being  
11          shut  
12          hard,  
13          pal.

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Bukowski, Charles:the replacements [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems  
(1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           Jack London drinking his life away while  
2           writing of strange and heroic men.  
3           Eugene O'Neill drinking himself oblivious  
4           while writing his dark and poetic  
5           works.  
  
6           now our moderns  
7           lecture at universities  
8           in tie and suit,  
9           the little boys soberly studious,  
10          the little girls with glazed eyes  
11          looking  
12          up,  
13          the lawns so green, the books so dull,  
14          the life so dying of  
15          thirst.

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Bukowski, Charles:the genius [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           this man sometimes forgets who  
2           he is.  
3           sometimes he thinks he's the  
4           Pope.

5           other times he thinks he's a  
6           hunted rabbit  
7           and hides under the  
8           bed.

9           then  
10          all at once  
11          he'll recapture total  
12          clarity  
13          and begin creating  
14          works of  
15          art.

16          then he'll be all right  
17          for some  
18          time.

19          then, say,  
20          he'll be sitting with his  
21          wife  
22          and 3 or 4 other  
23          people  
24          discussing various  
25          matters

26          he will be charming,  
27          incisive,  
28          original.

29          then he'll do  
30          something  
31          strange.

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32          like once  
33          he stood up  
34          unzipped  
35          and began

36       pissing  
37       on the  
38       rug.

39       another time  
40       he ate a paper  
41       napkin.

42       and there was  
43       the time  
44       he got into his  
45       car  
46       and drove it  
47       backwards  
48       all the way to  
49       the  
50       grocery store  
51       and back  
52       again  
53       backwards  
54       the other motorists  
55       screaming at  
56       him  
57       but he  
58       made it  
59       there and  
60       back  
61       without  
62       incident  
63       and without  
64       being  
65       stopped  
66       by a patrol  
67       car.

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68       but he's best  
69       as the  
70       Pope  
71       and his  
72       Latin  
73       is very  
74       good.

75       his works of  
76       art  
77       aren't that  
78       exceptional  
79       but they allow him  
80       to  
81       survive  
82       and to live with  
83       a series of  
84       19-year-old



85           wives  
86           who  
87           cut his hair  
88           his toenails  
89           bib  
90           tuck and  
91           feed  
92           him.

93           he wears everybody  
94           out  
95           but  
96           himself.

[Page 130]

Bukowski, Charles: a poet in New York [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           eating out tonight  
2           I find a table alone  
3           and while waiting for my order  
4           take out my wife's copy of  
5           A Poet in New York.  
6           I often carry things to read  
7           so that I will not have to look at  
8           the people.

9           I find the poems bad (for me)  
10          these poems written in 1929  
11          the year of the stock market  
12          crash.

13          I close the book and look at  
14          the people.

15          my order arrives.  
16          the food is bad too.

17          some say that bad and good  
18          run in streaks.

19          I hope so.  
20          I wait for the good, put a slice of  
21          lemon chicken into my  
22          mouth, chew  
23          and pretend that everything is  
24          fairly

25            fine.

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Bukowski, Charles:no sale [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1            I just sat in the bar  
2            non compos mentis.

3            it was about a week before  
4            Xmas.  
5            big Ed was selling trees  
6            outside.

7            he came into the  
8            bar.

9            "Jesus, it's freezing out  
10           there!"

11           big Ed looked at me.

12           "Hank, you go stand out there  
13           with the trees.  
14           if anybody wants to buy  
15           one, you come in and  
16           get me."

17           I stood outside.

18           I was in my shirt sleeves.  
19           I didn't have a coat.  
20           it was snowing.  
21           it was ice cold  
22           but a nice ice  
23           cold.  
24           I wasn't used to snow  
25           but I liked the snow.

26           I stood with the trees.

27           I stood there about 20  
28           minutes

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29           then big Ed came  
30           out.

31           "nobody come by?"

32           "no, Ed."

33           "you go on in, tell Billy Boy  
34           to give you a drink on  
35           my tab."

36           I walked in  
37           got a stool.

38           I told Billy Boy,  
39           "double scotch and water,  
40           Ed's tab."

41           Billy Boy poured.

42           "you sell any trees?"

43           "no trees."

44           Billy Boy looked at  
45           the patrons.

46           "hey, Hank didn't sell  
47           no trees."

48           "whatsa matter, Hank?"  
49           somebody asked.

50           I didn't answer.  
51           I took a hit of my  
52           drink.

53           "how come no trees were  
54           sold?" somebody else  
55           asked.

[Page 133]

56 "as the bee swarms to  
57 honey, as night follows  
58 day  
59 in the stink of time,  
60 it will  
61 happen."

62 "what will happen?"

63 "somebody will sell a tree  
64 though it won't necessarily  
65 be me."

66 I finished my drink.

67 there was  
68 silence.

69 then somebody said,  
70 "this guy is some kind of  
71 nut."

72 being there  
73 with those  
74 I decided  
75 I had no argument  
76 with  
77 that.

[Page 134]

Bukowski, Charles: this [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 self-congratulatory nonsense as the  
2 famous gather to applaud their seeming  
3 greatness

4 you  
5 wonder where  
6 the real ones are

7 what  
8 giant cave  
9 hides them

10 as  
11 the deathly talentless  
12 bow to  
13 accolades

14 as  
15 the fools are  
16 fooled  
17 again

18 you  
19 wonder where  
20 the real ones are

21 if there are  
22 real ones.

23 this  
24 self-congratulatory nonsense  
25 has lasted  
26 decades  
27 and  
28 with some exceptions

29 centuries.

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30 this  
31 is so dreary  
32 is so absolutely pitiless

33 it  
34 churns the gut to  
35 powder  
36 shackles hope

37 it  
38 makes little things  
39 like  
40 pulling up a shade  
41 or  
42 putting on your shoes  
43 or  
44 walking out on the street

45 more difficult  
46 near  
47 damnable

48           as  
49           the famous gather to  
50           applaud their  
51           seeming  
52           greatness

53           as  
54           the fools are  
55           fooled  
56           again

57           humanity  
58           you sick  
59           motherfucker.

[Page 136]

Bukowski, Charles:now [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           to reach here  
2           gliding into old age  
3           the decades gone  
4           without ever meeting one person  
5           truly evil  
6           without ever meeting one person  
7           truly exceptional  
8           without ever meeting one person  
9           truly good

10           gliding into old age

11           the decades gone

12           the mornings are the worst.

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Bukowski, Charles:in error [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           a warrior  
2           I come in from a long but  
3           victorious day  
4           at the track.

5           she greets me with some  
6           trash  
7           which I carry and dump  
8           into the garbage  
9           can.

10          "Jesus Christ," she says,  
11          "push the lid down tight!  
12          the ants will be  
13          everywhere!"

14          I push the lid down tight.

15          I think of Amsterdam.  
16          I think of pigeons flying from a  
17          roof.  
18          I think of Time dangling from  
19          a  
20          paper clip.

21          she's right, of course: the lid  
22          should be  
23          tight.

24          I walk slowly back  
25          into  
26          the  
27          house.

[Page 138]

Bukowski, Charles:confession [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           waiting for death  
2           like a cat  
3           that will jump on the  
4           bed

5           I am so very sorry for  
6           my wife

7           she will see this  
8           stiff  
9           white  
10          body

11          shake it once, then  
12          maybe  
13          again:

14          "Hank!"

15          Hank won't  
16          answer.

17          it's not my death that  
18          worries me, it's my wife  
19          left with this  
20          pile of  
21          nothing.

22          I want to  
23          let her know  
24          though  
25          that all the nights  
26          sleeping  
27          beside her

28          even the useless  
29          arguments  
30          were things

[Page 139]

31          ever splendid

32          and the hard  
33          words  
34          I ever feared to  
35          say  
36          can now be  
37          said:

38          I love  
39          you.

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Bukowski, Charles:mugged [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 finished,  
2 can't find the handle,  
3 mugged in the backalleys of nowhere,  
4 too many dark days and nights,  
5 too many unkind noons, plus a  
6 steady fixation for  
7 the ladies of death.

8 I am  
9 finished. roll me  
10 up, package  
11 me,  
12 toss me  
13 to the birds of Normandy or the  
14 gulls of Santa Monica, I  
15 no longer  
16 read  
17 I  
18 no longer  
19 breed,  
20 I  
21 talk to old men over quiet  
22 fences.

23 is this where my suicide complex  
24 un-  
25 complexes?: as  
26 I am asked over the telephone:  
27 did you ever know Kerouac?

28 I now allow cars to pass me on the freeway.  
29 I haven't been in a fist fight for 15 years.  
30 I have to get up and piss 3 times a night.

31 and when I see a sexpot on the street I  
32 only see  
33 trouble.

[Page 141]

34 I am  
35 finished, back to square one,  
36 drinking alone and listening to classical  
37 music.

38 much about dying is getting ready.  
39 the tiger walks through my dreams.

40           the cigarette in my mouth just exploded.

41           curious things still do  
42           occur.

43           no, I never knew Kerouac.

44           so you see:  
45           my life wasn't  
46           useless  
47           after  
48           all.

[Page 142]

Bukowski, Charles:the writer [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           when I think of the things I endured trying to be a  
2           writer---all those rooms in all those cities,  
3           nibbling on tiny bits of food that wouldn't  
4           keep a rat  
5           alive.

6           I was so thin I could slice bread with my  
7           shoulderblades, only I seldom had  
8           bread ...  
9           meanwhile, writing things down  
10          again and again  
11          on pieces of paper.

12          and when I moved from one place to  
13          another  
14          my cardboard suitcase was just  
15          that: paper outside stuffed with  
16          paper inside.

17          each new landlady would  
18          ask, "what do you  
19          do?"

20          "I'm a writer."

21          "oh ..."

22 as I settled into tiny rooms to evoke my  
23 craft  
24 many of them pitied me, gave me little  
25 tidbits like apples, walnuts,  
26 peaches ...  
27 little did they know  
28 that that  
29 was about all that I  
30 ate.

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31 but their pity ended when  
32 they found cheap wine bottles in my  
33 place.

34 it's all right to be a starving writer  
35 but not  
36 a starving writer who  
37 drinks.  
38 drunks are never forgiven  
39 anything.

40 but when the world is closing in very  
41 fast  
42 a bottle of wine seems a very  
43 reasonable friend.

44 ah. all those landladies,  
45 most of them heavy, slow, their husbands  
46 long dead, I can still see those  
47 dears  
48 climbing up and down the stairways of  
49 their world.

50 they ruled my very existence:  
51 without them allowing me  
52 an extra week on the rent  
53 now and then,  
54 I was out on the  
55 street

56 and I couldn't WRITE  
57 on the street.  
58 it was very important to have a  
59 room, a door, those  
60 walls.

61 oh, those dark mornings  
62 in those beds

63 listening to their footsteps  
64 listening to them cough

[Page 144]

65 hearing the flushing of their  
66 toilets, smelling the cooking of  
67 their food  
68 while waiting  
69 for some word  
70 on my submissions to New York City  
71 and the world,  
72 my submissions to those educated,  
73 intelligent, snobbish, inbred,  
74 formal, comfortable people  
75 out there

76 they truly took their time to  
77 say, no.

78 yes, in those dark beds  
79 with the landladies rustling about  
80 puttering and snooping, sharpening  
81 utensils,  
82 I often thought of those editors and  
83 publishers out there  
84 who didn't recognize  
85 what I was trying to say  
86 in my special  
87 way

88 and I thought, they must be  
89 wrong.

90 then this would be followed  
91 with a thought much worse  
92 than that:

93 I could be a  
94 fool:

95 almost every writer thinks  
96 they are doing  
97 exceptional work.

[Page 145]

98 that's  
99 normal.

100 being a fool is

101       normal.  
  
102       and then I'd  
103       get out of bed  
104       find a piece of  
105       paper  
106       and start  
107       writing  
108       again.

[Page 146]

Bukowski, Charles:they don't eat like us [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems  
(1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           my father eating.  
  
2           his ears moved.  
  
3           he munched with great vigor.  
  
4           I wished him in hell.  
  
5           I watched the fork in his hand.  
6           I watched it put food into his mouth.  
  
7           the food I ate was tasteless and deadly.  
8           his small bits of conversation entered my head.  
9           the words ran down my spine.  
10          they spilled into my shoes.  
  
11          "eat your food, Henry," my mother said.  
  
12          he said, "many people are starving and don't eat as well as us!"  
  
13          I wished him in hell.  
14          I watched his fork.  
15          it gathered more food and put it into his mouth.  
16          he chewed in a dog-like fashion.  
17          his ears moved.  
  
18          the brutal beatings he gave me I was ready for.  
19          but watching him eat brought on the darkness.

20           there at the tablecloth.  
21           there with the green and blue wooden napkin holders.

22           "eat your food or I'll strop your god damned ass," he told me.

23           later in life I made him pay somewhat.  
24           but he still owes me.

25           and I'll never collect.

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Bukowski, Charles:let me tell you [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems  
(1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           hell is built  
2           piece by piece  
3           brick by brick  
4           around  
5           you.  
6           it's a gradual,  
7           not a rapid  
8           process.

9           we build our  
10          own  
11          inferno,  
12          blame  
13          others.

14          but hell is  
15          hell.

16          wordly hell is  
17          hell.

18          my hell and  
19          your  
20          hell.

21          our  
22          hell.

23          hell, hell,  
24          hell.

25           the song of  
26           hell.

27           putting your  
28           shoes on  
29           in the  
30           morning.  
31           hell.

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Bukowski, Charles:blasted apart with the first breath [from The Last Night of  
the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           running out of days  
2           as the banister glints  
3           in the early morning sun.

4           there will be no rest  
5           even in our dreams.

6           now, all there is to do is  
7           reset  
8           broken moments.

9           when even to exist seems a  
10          victory  
11          then surely our luck has  
12          run thin

13          thinner than a bloody stream  
14          toward death.

15          life is a sad song:  
16          we have heard too many  
17          voices  
18          seen too many  
19          faces  
20          too many  
21          bodies

22          worst have been the faces:  
23          a dirty joke that no one  
24          can understand.

25 barbaric, senseless days total  
26 in your skull;  
27 reality is a juiceless  
28 orange.

[Page 149]

29 there is no plan  
30 no out  
31 no divinity  
32 no sparrow of  
33 joy.

34 we can't compare life to  
35 anything---that's  
36 too dreary a  
37 prospect.

38 relatively speaking,  
39 we were never short on  
40 courage

41 but, at best, the odds  
42 remained long  
43 and  
44 at worst,  
45 unchangeable.

46 and what was worst:  
47 not that we wasted  
48 it  
49 but that it was  
50 wasted  
51 on us:

52 coming out of  
53 the Womb  
54 trapped  
55 in light and  
56 darkness

57 stricken and numbed

58 alone in the temperate zone of  
59 dumb agony

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60 now



61           running out of days  
62           as the banister glints  
63           in the early morning sun.

[Page 151]

Bukowski, Charles: Elvis lives [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           the boy was going to take the bus out  
2           to see the  
3           Graceland Mansion

4           then  
5           the Greyhound Lines went  
6           on strike.

7           there were only two clerks  
8           and two lines  
9           at the station  
10          and the lines were  
11          50 to 65 people  
12          long.

13          after two hours in line  
14          one of the clerks told the  
15          boy  
16          that his bus  
17          would leave  
18          as soon as the substitute  
19          driver arrived.

20          "when will that be?" the  
21          boy asked.

22          "we can't  
23          be certain," the  
24          clerk answered.

25          the boy slept on the floor  
26          that night  
27          but by 9 a.m.  
28          the next morning  
29          the substitute driver  
30          still had not  
31          arrived.

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32           the boy had to wait  
33           in another line  
34           to get to the  
35           toilet.

36           he finally got a  
37           stall, carefully  
38           fitted the  
39           sanitary toilet seat  
40           paper cover,  
41           pulled down his  
42           pants,  
43           his shorts  
44           and  
45           sat down.

46           luckily  
47           the boy had a  
48           pencil.

49           he found a clean  
50           space  
51           among all the  
52           smeared and demented  
53           scrawlings and  
54           drawings

55           and very  
56           carefully  
57           and  
58           heavily  
59           he printed:

60           HEARTBREAK HOTEL

61           then he dropped the  
62           first  
63           one.

[Page 153]

1 after 9 long races among greedy faces  
2 on a hot Sunday that hardly rhymes with  
3 reason  
4 I have murdered another day,  
5 come out with shoelaces flopping (while  
6 secretly craving to be in a moss-  
7 lined cave, say,  
8 watching black and white cartoons  
9 while wanton simplicity soothes the  
10 muddled brain)  
11 as my buddy the valet races the  
12 machine up, revving the 8-year-  
13 old engine, he leaps  
14 out:  
15 "how ya doin', baby?"  
16 "things have me by the jugular, Frank,  
17 I'm ready to run up the white  
18 flag."  
19 "not you, baby, you're my  
20 leader!"  
21 "you can do better than that,  
22 Frank ..."

23 I get in, hook the seat belt, put on  
24 the driving glasses, put it in first ...

25 "hey, man," he sticks his head into the  
26 window, "let's go out and get drunk and  
27 kick some ass and find some  
28 pussy!"

29 I tell him, "I'll consider that."

30 as I pull out I can see him in the rear-

[Page 154]

31 view mirror: he's giving me the  
32 finger.

33 I smile for the first time in 7 or  
34 8 hours.

[Page 155]

Bukowski, Charles: see here, you [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1 blazing bastard fools

2 poets  
3 with your  
4 idiot scrolls  
5 you are so  
6 pompous  
7 in your  
8 knowledge  
9 so  
10 assured  
11 that you are  
12 on a hot roll  
13 to  
14 nirvana

15 you  
16 soft lumps of  
17 humanity

18 you  
19 imitators of  
20 other  
21 pretenders

22 you are still  
23 in  
24 the shadow of  
25 the  
26 Mother

27 you  
28 have never  
29 bargained with  
30 the  
31 Beast

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32 you have never  
33 tasted  
34 the full flavor of  
35 Hell

36 you have never  
37 seen  
38 the Edge of  
39 yourself

40 you have never  
41 been alone  
42 with the  
43 razor-sharp  
44 walls

45           you  
46           blazing bastard fools  
47           with your  
48           idiot scrolls

49           there is nothing  
50           to  
51           know

52           no place  
53           to  
54           travel

55           your  
56           lives  
57           your  
58           deaths  
59           your  
60           idiot  
61           scrolls

62           useless

63           disgusting

[Page 157]

64           and

65           not as real  
66           as

67           the  
68           wart  
69           on the ass  
70           of  
71           a  
72           hog.

73           you  
74           are rejected by  
75           circumstance.

76           good  
77           bye.

[Page 158]

Bukowski, Charles:spark [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 I always resented all the years, the hours, the  
2 minutes I gave them as a working stiff, it  
3 actually hurt my head, my insides, it made me  
4 dizzy and a bit crazy---I couldn't understand the  
5 murdering of my years  
6 yet my fellow workers gave no signs of  
7 agony, many of them even seemed satisfied, and  
8 seeing them that way drove me almost as crazy as  
9 the dull and senseless work.

10 the workers submitted.  
11 the work pounded them to nothingness, they were  
12 scooped-out and thrown away.

13 I resented each minute, every minute as it was  
14 mutilated  
15 and nothing relieved the monotony.

16 I considered suicide.  
17 I drank away my few leisure hours.

18 I worked for decades.

19 I lived with the worst kind of women, they killed what  
20 the job failed to kill.

21 I knew that I was dying.  
22 something in me said, go ahead, die, sleep, become as  
23 them, accept.

24 then something else in me said, no, save the tiniest  
25 bit.  
26 it needn't be much, just a spark.  
27 a spark can set a whole forest on  
28 fire.  
29 just a spark.  
30 save it.

[Page 159]

31 I think I did.  
32 I'm glad I did.  
33 what a lucky god damned

34            thing.

[Page 160]

Bukowski, Charles: the science of physiognomy [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1            long gone along the way, faces  
2            grey and white and black and brown, and  
3            eyes, all color of eyes.  
4            eyes are odd, I have lived with a woman,  
5            at least one, where the sex was fair, the  
6            conversation passable and sometimes there was  
7            even a seeming love  
8            but then I suddenly noticed the eyes, saw there  
9            the dark smeared walls of a stinking  
10           hell.

11           (of course, I am pleased that I do not often have to  
12           see my own eyes, lips, hair, ears, so  
13           forth---  
14           I avoid the mirror with a studied  
15           regularity.)

16           long gone along the way, he had a face like a  
17           mole pie, fat and unshivering and he walked up to  
18           me in the railroad yards, I was beastly sick  
19           and that flesh plate shook my innards, my psycho-  
20           kid insides as he said, "I'm waiting on my pay-  
21           check, I been squeezing this nickel so hard that the  
22           buffalo is screaming." he showed me the  
23           nickel.  
24           tough, but no beer, I walked away from him,  
25           my face white like a bright headlight, I walked  
26           away from him and toward the faces of the non-  
27           whites who  
28           hated me with a natural  
29           ease.

30           long gone along the way, the landladies' faces,  
31           doomed, powdered, old lilac faces, old lovely dolls  
32           with husbands so long gone, the agony diminished but  
33           still there as I followed them up stairways nearly a  
34           century old to some cubicle of a room and I always

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35           told them, "ah, a very nice room ..."; to pay  
36           then, close the door, undress, lay upon that  
37           bed and turn out the light (it was always early  
38           evening) and then soon to hear the same sound:

39 the scurry of my old friends: either the roaches or  
40 the mice or the rats.

41 long gone along the way, now I wonder about Inez  
42 and Irene and their sky-blue eyes and their wonderful  
43 legs and breasts  
44 but mostly  
45 their faces, faces carved out of a marble that  
46 sometimes the gods  
47 bestow and  
48 Inez and Irene sat in front of me in class and learned about  
49 algebra, the shortest distance between two points, the  
50 Treaty of Versailles, about Attila the Hun and  
51 etc.  
52 and I watched them and wondered what they were  
53 thinking?  
54 nothing much,  
55 probably.  
56 and I wonder where they are tonight  
57 with their faces these 5 decades and 2 years  
58 later?  
59 the skin which covers the bone, the eyes that  
60 smile; quick, turn out the light, let the dark  
61 dance ...

62 the most beautiful face I ever saw was that of a  
63 paperman, a newsboy, the old fellow so long gone  
64 down the way  
65 who sat at a stand at Beverly and Vermont,  
66 his head, his face looked like what they  
67 called him: The Frog Man. I saw him  
68 often but we seldom spoke and  
69 The Frog Man died suddenly  
70 and was gone  
71 but I will always remember him  
72 and one night

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73 I came out of a nearby bar,  
74 he was there at his stand and  
75 he looked at me and said, "you and I, we know the same  
76 things."

77 I nodded, put both thumbs up, and that big Frog  
78 face, the big Frog head lifted in the moonlight  
79 and began laughing the most terrible and real  
80 laughter I have ever  
81 heard.

82 long gone along the way

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Bukowski, Charles:victory [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1            what bargains we have made  
2            we have  
3            kept  
4            and  
5            as the dogs of the hours  
6            close in  
7            nothing  
8            can be taken  
9            from us  
10          but  
11          our lives.

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Bukowski, Charles:Edward Sbragia [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1            puffing on tiny cigarette butts as the world washes to the  
2            shore I  
3            burn my  
4            dumb lips  
5            think of  
6            Manfred Freiherr von Richthofen  
7            und sein  
8            Fliegerzirkus.

9            as my cat sits in the bathroom window I  
10          light a new  
11          stub

12          as Norway winks and the dogs of hell pray for  
13          me

14          downstairs my wife studies the  
15          Italian  
16          language.

17          up here  
18          I would give half my ass for a  
19          decent  
20          smoke ...

21 I  
22 sneeze  
23 then  
24 jump: a little red coal of ash has dropped onto my  
25 white white  
26 belly---I  
27 dig the fiery bit out with my  
28 fingers:  
29 a bit of minor  
30 pain

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31 I type naked: see my sulking soul  
32 now  
33 with a little pink  
34 dot.

35 you see, I have my own show going on up  
36 here, I don't need Vegas or cable  
37 tv,  
38 the label on my wine bottle states  
39 in part:

40 "... our winemaker, Edward Sbragia, has retained the  
41 fresh, fruity character of the Pinot Noir and Napa  
42 Gamay grapes ..."

43 the dogs of hell pray for me as the  
44 world washes to the  
45 shore.

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Bukowski, Charles: wandering in the cage [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 languid conjecture during hours of moil, trapped in the shadows  
2 of the father.  
3 sidewalks outside of cafes are lonely  
4 through the day.

5 my cat looks at me and is not sure what I am and  
6 I look back and am pleased to feel  
7 the same  
8 about him ...

9 reading 2 issues of a famous magazine of 40 years  
10 ago, the writing that I felt was bad then,

11 I still feel  
12 is  
13 that way

14 and none of the writers have lasted.

15 sometimes there is a strange justice  
16 working  
17 somewhere.

18 sometimes  
19 not ...

20 grammar school was the first awakening of a long hell  
21 to come:  
22 meeting other beings as horrible as my  
23 parents.

24 something I never thought  
25 possible ...

26 when I won the medal for Manual of Arms in the  
27 R.O.T.C.  
28 I wasn't interested in  
29 winning.

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30 I wasn't much interested in anything, even the  
31 girls seemed a bad game  
32 to chase: all too much for all too  
33 little

34 at night before sleeping I often considered what I  
35 would do, what I would be:  
36 bank robber, drunk, beggar, idiot, common  
37 laborer.

38 I settled on idiot and common laborer, it  
39 seemed more comfortable than any of the  
40 alternatives ...

41 the best thing about near-starvation and hunger is  
42 that when you finally  
43 eat  
44 it is such a beautiful and delicious and  
45 magical thing.

46 people who eat 3 meals a day throughout life  
47 have never really  
48 tasted  
49 food ...

50 people are strange: they are constantly angered by  
51 trivial things,  
52 but on a major matter  
53 like  
54 totally wasting their lives,  
55 they hardly seem to  
56 notice ...

57 on writers: I found out that most of them  
58 swam together.  
59 there were schools, establishments,  
60 theories.  
61 groups gathered and fought each  
62 other.  
63 there was literary politics.

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64 there was game-playing and  
65 bitterness.

66 I always thought writing was a  
67 solitary profession.

68 still do ...

69 animals never worry about  
70 Heaven or Hell.

71 neither do  
72 I.

73 maybe that's why  
74 we  
75 get along ...

76 when lonely people come around  
77 I soon can understand why  
78 other people leave them  
79 alone.

80 and that which would be a  
81 blessing to  
82 me

83 is a horror to  
84 them ...

85 poor poor Celine.  
86 he only wrote one book.  
87 forget the others.  
88 but what a book it was:  
89 Voyage au bout de la nuit.  
90 it took everything out of  
91 him.  
92 it left him a hopscotch  
93 odd-ball  
94 skittering through the

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95 fog of  
96 eventuality ...

97 the United States is a very strange  
98 place: it reached its apex in  
99 1970  
100 and since then  
101 for every year  
102 it has regressed  
103 3 years,  
104 until now  
105 in 1989  
106 it is 1930  
107 in the way of  
108 doing things.

109 you don't have to go to the movies  
110 to see a horror  
111 show.

112 there is a madhouse near the post office  
113 where I mail my works  
114 out.

115 I never park in front of the post office,  
116 I park in front of the madhouse  
117 and walk down.

118 I walk past the madhouse.

119 some of the lesser mad are allowed  
120 out on the porch.  
121 they sit like  
122 pigeons.

123 I feel a brotherhood with  
124 them.  
125 but I don't sit with them.

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126 I walk down and drop my works  
127 in the first class slot.

128 I am supposed to know what I am  
129 doing.

130 I walk back, look at them and  
131 don't look at  
132 them.

133 I get in my car and drive  
134 off.

135 I am allowed to drive a  
136 car.

137 I drive it all the way back to my  
138 house.

139 I drive my car up the driveway,  
140 thinking,  
141 what am I doing?

142 I get out of my car  
143 and one of my 5 cats walks up to  
144 me, he is a very fine  
145 fellow.

146 I reach down and touch  
147 him.

148 then I feel all right.

149 I am exactly what I am supposed to  
150 be.

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Bukowski, Charles:the pack [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           the dogs are at it again; they leap and  
2           tear, back off, circle, then  
3           attack again.

4           and I had thought this was over, I had  
5           thought that they had  
6           forgotten; now there are only  
7           more of them.

8           and I am older,  
9           now

10          but the dogs are  
11          ageless

12          and as always they tear not only at  
13          the flesh but also at  
14          the mind and the spirit.

15          now  
16          they are circling me  
17          in this room.

18          they are not  
19          beautiful; they are the dogs  
20          from hell

21          and they will find you  
22          too

23          even though you are one  
24          of them  
25          now.

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Bukowski, Charles:question and answer [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           he sat naked and drunk in a room of summer  
2           night, running the blade of the knife  
3           under his fingernails, smiling, thinking  
4           of all the letters he had received  
5           telling him that  
6           the way he lived and wrote about  
7           that---  
8           it had kept them going when  
9           all seemed  
10          truly  
11          hopeless.

12          putting the blade on the table, he  
13          flicked it with a finger  
14          and it whirled  
15          in a flashing circle  
16          under the light.

17          who the hell is going to save  
18          me? he  
19          thought.

20          as the knife stopped spinning  
21          the answer came:  
22          you're going to have to  
23          save yourself.

24          still smiling,  
25          a: he lit a  
26          cigarette  
27          b: he poured  
28          another  
29          drink  
30          c: gave the blade  
31          another  
32          spin.

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Bukowski, Charles: fan letter [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           I been readin' you for a long time now,  
2           I just put Billy Boy to bed,  
3           he got 7 mean ticks from somewhere,  
4           I got 2,  
5           my husband, Benny, he got 3.  
6           some of us love bugs, others hate  
7           them.  
8           Benny writes poems.



9           he was in the same magazine as you  
10          once.  
11          Benny is the world's greatest writer  
12          but he got this temper.  
13          he gave a readin' once and somebody  
14          laughed at one of his serious poems  
15          and Benny took his thing out right  
16          there  
17          and pissed on stage.  
18          he says you write good but that you  
19          couldn't carry his balls in a paper  
20          bag.  
21          anyhow, I made a BIG POT OF MARMALADE  
22          tonight,  
23          we all just LOVE marmalade here.  
24          Benny lost his job yesterday, he told his  
25          boss to stick it up his ass  
26          but I still got my job down at the  
27          manicure shop.  
28          you know fags come in to get their nails  
29          done?  
30          you aren't a fag, are you, Mr.  
31          Chinaski?  
32          anyhow, I just felt like writing you.  
33          your books are read and read around  
34          here.  
35          Benny says you're an old fart, you  
36          write pretty good but that you  
37          couldn't carry his balls in a

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38          paper sack.  
39          do you like bugs, Mr. Chinaski?  
40          I think the marmalade is cool enough to  
41          eat now.  
42          so goodbye.

43          Dora

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Bukowski, Charles:hold on, it's a belly laugh [from The Last Night of the Earth  
Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           it would be good to get  
2           out of here,  
3           just go,  
4           pop off, get away from  
5           memories of this  
6           and all  
7           that,  
8           but staying has its

9           flavor too:  
10          all those babes who  
11          thought they were  
12          hot numbers  
13          now living in dirty  
14          flats  
15          while looking forward  
16          to the next  
17          episode on  
18          some Soap Opera,  
19          and all those guys,  
20          those who really  
21          thought  
22          they were going to  
23          make it,  
24          grinning in the  
25          Year Book with their  
26          tight-skinned  
27          mugs,  
28          now they are  
29          cops,  
30          clerk typists,  
31          operators of  
32          sandwich stands,  
33          horse grooms,  
34          plops  
35          in the dust.

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36          it's good to stay  
37          around  
38          to see what  
39          happened to  
40          all the  
41          others---only  
42          when you go to  
43          the bathroom,  
44          avoid the  
45          mirror  
46          and  
47          don't look  
48          at  
49          what you  
50          flush  
51          away.

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Bukowski, Charles:finished [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           the ball comes up to the

2           plate and I can't  
3           see  
4           it.

5           my batting average has dropped to  
6           .231

7           small things constantly  
8           irritate me  
9           and I can't sleep  
10          nights.

11          "you'll come back,  
12          Harry," my teammates  
13          tell me.

14          then they grin and are  
15          secretly  
16          pleased.

17          I've been benched for a  
18          22 year old  
19          kid.

20          he looks good up there:  
21          power, lots of line  
22          drives.

23          "ever thought of coaching?"  
24          the manager asks.

25          "no," I tell him, "how about  
26          you?"

27          when I get home my wife  
28          asks, "you get in the line-  
29          up tonight?"

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30          "nope."

31          "don't worry, he'll put you  
32          in."

33          "no, he won't. I'm gonna  
34          pinch hit the rest of the  
35          season."

36 I go into the bathroom and  
37 look into the  
38 mirror.

39 I'm no 22 year old  
40 kid.

41 what gets me is that it  
42 seemed to happen  
43 overnight.

44 one night I was good.  
45 the next night, it  
46 seemed, I was  
47 finished.

48 I come out of the bathroom  
49 and my wife says,  
50 "don't worry, all you need  
51 is a little  
52 rest."

53 "I been thinking about going  
54 into coaching," I tell  
55 her.

56 "sure," she says, "and after  
57 that I'll bet you'll be a  
58 good manager."

59 "hell yes," I say, "anything  
60 on tv?"

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Bukowski, Charles:zero [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 dark taste in mouth, my neck is stiff, I am looking for  
2 my sonic vibrator, the music on my radio is diseased,  
3 the winds of death seep through my slippers, and a  
4 terrible letter in the mail today from a pale non-  
5 soul  
6 who requests that he may come by to see me  
7 in repayment, he says, for a ride he gave me home  
8 from a drunken Pasadena party

9           20 years ago.  
10          also, one of the cats shit on the rug this  
11          morning  
12          and in the first race I bet this afternoon  
13          the horse tossed the jock  
14          coming out of the gate.

15          downstairs  
16          I have a large photo of Hemingway  
17          drunk before noon in Havana, he's on the floor  
18          mouth open, his big belly trying to flop  
19          out of his shirt.

20          I feel like that photo and I'm not even drunk.  
21          maybe  
22          that's the problem.

23          whatever the problem is, it's there, and worse, it  
24          shouldn't be  
25          for I have been a lucky man, I shouldn't even  
26          be here  
27          after all I have done to myself  
28          and after all they have done  
29          to me  
30          I ought to be kneeling to the gods and giving  
31          thanks.  
32          instead, I deride their kindness by being  
33          impatient  
34          with the world.

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35          maybe a damned good night's sleep will bring me back  
36          to a gentle sanity.  
37          but at the moment, I look about this room and, like  
38          myself, it's all in disarray: things fallen  
39          out of place, cluttered, jumbled, lost, knocked  
40          over, and I can't put it straight, don't  
41          want to.

42          perhaps living through these petty days will get us ready  
43          for the dangerous ones.

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Bukowski, Charles: eyeless through space [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems  
(1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           it's no longer any good, sucker, they've  
2           turned out the lights, they've  
3           blocked the rear entrance

4           and  
5           the front's on fire;  
6           nobody knows your name;  
7           down at the opera they play  
8           checkers;  
9           the city fountains piss  
10          blood;  
11          the extremities are reamed  
12          and  
13          they've hung the best  
14          barber;  
15          the dim souls have ascended;  
16          the cardboard souls smile;  
17          the love of dung is unanimous;  
18          it's no longer any good, sucker, the  
19          graves have emptied out onto the  
20          living;  
21          last is first,  
22          lost is everything;  
23          the giant dogs mourn through dandelion  
24          dreams;  
25          the panthers welcome cages;  
26          the onion heart is frosted,  
27          destiny is destitute,  
28          the horns of reason are muted as  
29          the laughter of fools blockades the air;  
30          the champions are dead  
31          and  
32          the newly born are smitten;  
33          the jetliners vomit the eyeless through  
34          space;  
35          it's no longer any good, sucker, it's been  
36          getting to that  
37          right along

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38          and now  
39          it's here  
40          and you can't touch it smell it see it  
41          because it's nothing everywhere as  
42          you look up or down or turn or sit or stand  
43          or sleep or run,  
44          it's no longer any good, sucker.  
45          it's no longer any good  
46          sucker sucker sucker  
47          and  
48          if you don't already know  
49          I'm not surprised  
50          and  
51          if you do, sucker, good  
52          luck  
53          in the dark  
54          going nowhere.

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Bukowski, Charles:tag up and hold [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems  
(1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           not much chance in  
2           Amsterdam;  
3           cheese dislikes the  
4           flea;  
5           the center fielder  
6           turns  
7           runs back  
8           in his stupid  
9           uniform,  
10          times it all  
11          perfectly:  
12          ball and man  
13          arriving as  
14          one  
15          he  
16          gloves it  
17          precisely  
18          in tune with the  
19          universe;  
20          not much chance in  
21          east  
22          Kansas City;  
23          and  
24          have you noticed  
25          how  
26          men stand  
27          side by side  
28          in urinals,  
29          trained in the  
30          act,  
31          looking straight  
32          ahead;  
33          the center fielder  
34          wings it  
35          into the  
36          cut-off  
37          man

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38          who eyes the  
39          runners;  
40          the sun plunges  
41          down  
42          as somewhere  
43          an old  
44          woman  
45          opens a window  
46          looks at a  
47          geranium,  
48          goes for a cup of  
49          water;  
50          not much chance in  
51          New York City

52           or  
53           in the look  
54           of the eye  
55           of  
56           the man  
57           who sits in a  
58           chair  
59           across from  
60           you

61           he is  
62           going  
63           to ask you  
64           certain  
65           questions about  
66           certain  
67           things

68           especially  
69           about

70           what to  
71           do

72           without  
73           much chance.

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Bukowski, Charles: upon this time [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           fine then, thunderclaps at midnight, death in the  
2           plaza.  
3           my shoes need shining.  
4           my typewriter is silent.

5           I write this in pen  
6           in an old yellow  
7           notebook  
8           while  
9           leaning propped up against the wall  
10          behind the  
11          bed.



12 Hemingway said, "it won't come  
13 anymore."  
14 later---the gun  
15 into the  
16 mouth.

17 not writing is not good  
18 but trying to write  
19 when you can't is  
20 worse.

21 hey, I have excuses:  
22 I have TB and the  
23 antibiotics dull the  
24 brain.

25 "you'll write again," people  
26 assure me, "you'll be  
27 better than  
28 ever."

29 that's nice to know.

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30 but the typewriter is silent  
31 and it looks at  
32 me.

33 meanwhile, every two or three  
34 weeks  
35 I get a fan letter in the mail  
36 telling me that  
37 surely  
38 I must be  
39 the world's greatest  
40 writer.

41 but  
42 the typewriter is silent  
43 and looks at  
44 me....

45 this is one of the  
46 strangest times  
47 of my  
48 life.

49 I've got to do a  
50 Lazarus  
51 and I can't even  
52 shine

53            my shoes.

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Bukowski, Charles:Downtown Billy [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1            they used to call him  
2            "Downtown" Billy.

3            "Downtown" had these  
4            long arms  
5            and he swung them  
6            with  
7            abandon  
8            and with great  
9            force.

10           when you fought  
11           "Downtown" Billy  
12           you never knew  
13           where the punches  
14           were coming  
15           from: "They come  
16           from Downtown ..."

17           "Downtown" once rose  
18           all the way  
19           to #4 in his weight  
20           class,  
21           then he dropped out  
22           of the first  
23           ten.

24           then he fell to  
25           fighting 6 rounders,  
26           then 4.

27           the punches still  
28           came from  
29           Downtown  
30           but you could  
31           see them  
32           coming.

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33           then he was just a

34           sparring  
35           partner.

36           last I heard  
37           he left  
38           town.

39           today I feel  
40           like "Downtown" Billy,  
41           sitting in this  
42           blue garden chair  
43           under the  
44           walnut  
45           tree,  
46           watching the  
47           neighbor boy  
48           bounce a  
49           basketball,  
50           take some  
51           fancy steps  
52           forward,  
53           then loop the  
54           ball  
55           through the  
56           hoop  
57           over the  
58           garage  
59           door.

60           I have just taken  
61           my  
62           pills.

[Page 189]

Bukowski, Charles:8 count [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           from my bed  
2           I watch  
3           3 birds  
4           on a telephone  
5           wire.

6           one flies  
7           off.  
8           then  
9           another.

10           one is left,  
11           then  
12           it too  
13           is gone.

14           my typewriter is  
15           tombstone  
16           still.

17           and I am  
18           reduced to bird  
19           watching.

20           just thought I'd  
21           let you  
22           know,  
23           fucker.

[Page 190]

Bukowski, Charles: ill [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           being very ill and very weak is a very strange  
2           thing.  
3           when it takes all your strength to get from the  
4           bedroom to the bathroom and back, it seems like  
5           a joke but  
6           you don't laugh.

7           back in bed you consider death again and find  
8           the same thing: the closer you get to it  
9           the less forbidding it  
10          becomes.

11          you have much time to examine the walls  
12          and outside  
13          birds on a telephone wire take on much  
14          importance.  
15          and there's the tv: men playing baseball  
16          day after day.

17          no appetite.  
18          food tastes like cardboard, it makes you  
19          ill, more than  
20          ill.

21 the good wife keeps insisting that you  
22 eat.  
23 "the doctor said ..."

24 poor dear.

25 and the cats.  
26 the cats jump up on the bed and look at me.  
27 they stare, then jump  
28 off.

29 what a world, you think: eat, work, fuck,  
30 die.

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31 luckily I have a contagious disease: no  
32 visitors.

33 the scale reads 155, down from  
34 217.

35 I look like a man in a death camp.  
36 I  
37 am.

38 still, I'm lucky: I feast on solitude, I  
39 will never miss the crowd.

40 I could read the great books but the great books don't  
41 interest me.

42 I sit in bed and wait for the whole thing to go  
43 one way or the  
44 other.

45 just like everybody  
46 else.

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1       it's no use, I've got to admit,  
2       I am into my first real  
3       writer's block  
4       after over  
5       5 decades  
6       of typing.  
7       I have some excuses:  
8       I've had a long  
9       illness  
10      and I'm nearing the age of  
11      70.  
12      and when you're near  
13      70 you always consider the  
14      possibility of  
15      slippage.  
16      but I am bucked-up  
17      by the fact that  
18      Cervantes  
19      wrote his greatest work  
20      at the age of  
21      80.  
22      but how many  
23      Cervantes  
24      are there?

25      I've been spoiled with the  
26      easy way I have created  
27      things,  
28      and now there's this  
29      miserable  
30      stoppage.

31      and now  
32      spiritually constipated I've  
33      grown testy,  
34      have screamed at my wife  
35      twice this week,

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36      once smashing a glass  
37      into the sink.  
38      bad form,  
39      sick nerves,  
40      bad  
41      style.

42      I should accept this  
43      writer's block.  
44      hell, I'm lucky I'm alive,  
45      I'm lucky I don't have  
46      cancer.  
47      I'm lucky in a hundred  
48      different ways.  
49      sometimes at night  
50      in bed

51 at one or two a.m.  
52 I will think about  
53 how lucky I am  
54 and it keeps me  
55 awake.

56 now I've always written in a  
57 selfish way, that is, to please  
58 myself.  
59 by writing things down I have  
60 been better able to  
61 live with them.

62 now, that's  
63 stopped.

64 I see other old men with canes  
65 sitting at bus stop benches,  
66 staring straight into the sun and  
67 seeing nothing.  
68 and I know there are other  
69 old men  
70 in hospitals and nursing  
71 homes

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72 sitting upright in their  
73 beds  
74 grunting over  
75 bedpans.  
76 death is nothing, brother,  
77 it's life that's  
78 hard.

79 writing has been my fountain  
80 of youth,  
81 my whore,  
82 my love,  
83 my gamble.

84 the gods have spoiled me.

85 yet look, I am still  
86 lucky,  
87 for writing about a  
88 writer's block  
89 is better than not writing  
90 at all.

[Page 195]

Bukowski, Charles:that I have known the dead [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           that I have known the dead and now I'm  
2           dying  
3           as they spoon succotash and  
4           noodles  
5           into a skull  
6           past  
7           caring.

8           that I have known the dead and now I'm  
9           dying  
10          in a world long ago  
11          gone

12          leaving this is  
13          nothing.  
14          loving it was  
15          too.

16          that I have known the dead and now I'm  
17          dying  
18          fingers thin to the  
19          bone,  
20          I offer no  
21          prayers.

22          that I have known the dead and now I'm  
23          dying

24          dying  
25          I have known the dead

26          here on earth  
27          and elsewhere;  
28          alone now,  
29          alone then,  
30          alone.

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Bukowski, Charles:are you drinking? [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]



1       washed-up, on shore, the old yellow notebook  
2       out again  
3       I write from the bed  
4       as I did last  
5       year.

6       will see the doctor,  
7       Monday.

8       "yes, doctor, weak legs, vertigo, head-  
9       aches and my back  
10      hurts."

11      "are you drinking?" he will ask.  
12      "are you getting your  
13      exercise, your  
14      vitamins?"

15      I think that I am just ill  
16      with life, the same stale yet  
17      fluctuating  
18      factors.

19      even at the track  
20      I watch the horses run by  
21      and it seems  
22      meaningless.

23      I leave early after buying tickets on the  
24      remaining races.

25      "taking off?" asks the mutuel  
26      clerk.

27      "yes, it's boring,"  
28      I tell him.

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29      "if you think it's boring  
30      out there," he tells me, "you oughta be  
31      back here."

32      so here I am  
33      propped against my pillows  
34      again

35           just an old guy  
36           just an old writer  
37           with a yellow  
38           notebook.

39           something is  
40           walking across the  
41           floor  
42           toward  
43           me.

44           oh, it's just  
45           my cat

46           this  
47           time.

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Bukowski, Charles:"D" [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           the doctor is into collecting art  
2           and the magazines in his waiting room  
3           are Artsy  
4           have thick covers, glistening pages,  
5           and large color  
6           photos.

7           the receptionist calls my name and  
8           I'm led into a waiting room with  
9           walls adorned with paintings  
10          and a chart of the human  
11          body.

12          the doctor enters: "how are you  
13          doing?"

14          not well, I think, or I wouldn't  
15          be here.

16          "now," he goes on, "I am surprised  
17          by the biopsy, I didn't expect  
18          this ..."

19          the doctor is a bald, well-scrubbed

20           pink fellow.

21           "I can almost always tell just by  
22           looking; this time, I  
23           missed ..."

24           he paused.

25           "go on," I say.

26           "all right, let's say there are  
27           4 types of cancer--A, B, C, D.

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28           well, you've got  
29           D.  
30           and if I had cancer I'd rather  
31           have your kind:  
32           D."

33           the doctor is in a tough business  
34           but the pay is  
35           good.

36           "well," he says, "we'll just burn it off,  
37           o.k.?"

38           I stretch out on the table and he has an  
39           instrument, I can feel the heat of it  
40           searing through the air  
41           but also  
42           I hear a whirring sound  
43           like a drill.

44           "it'll be over in a  
45           blink ..."

46           the small growth is just inside of  
47           the right nostril.  
48           the instrument touches it  
49           and  
50           the room is filled with the smell  
51           of burning flesh.

52           then he stops.

53           then he starts  
54           again.

55           there is pain but it's sharp and  
56           centered.

57           he stops  
58           again.

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59           "now we are going to do it  
60           once more to  
61           clean it  
62           up."

63           he applies the instrument  
64           again.  
65           this time I feel the most  
66           pain.

67           "there now ..."

68           it's finished, no bandage needed,  
69           it's  
70           cauterized.

71           then I'm at the receptionist's  
72           desk, she makes out a bill, I  
73           pay with my  
74           Mastercard, am out the door,  
75           down the stairway and there  
76           in the parking lot  
77           awaits  
78           my faithful automobile.

79           It's a day with a great deal of  
80           afternoon left

81           I light a cigarette, start the  
82           car and  
83           get the hell  
84           out of there  
85           moving toward something  
86           else.

[Page 201]

Bukowski, Charles: in the bottom [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           in the bottom of the hour  
2           lurks  
3           the smoking claw  
4           the red train  
5           the letter home  
6           the deep-fried blues.

7           in the bottom of the hour  
8           lurks  
9           the song you sang together  
10          the mouse in the attic  
11          the train window in the rain  
12          the whiskey breath on grandfather  
13          the coolness of the jail trustee.

14          in the bottom of the hour  
15          lurks  
16          the famous gone quite stupid  
17          churches with peeling white paint  
18          lovers who chose hyenas  
19          schoolgirls giggling at atrophy  
20          the suicide oceans of night.

21          in the bottom of the hour  
22          lurks  
23          button eyes in a cardboard face  
24          dead library books squeezed upright.

25          in the bottom of the hour  
26          lurks  
27          the octopus  
28          Gloria gone mad while shaving her armpits  
29          the gang wars  
30          no toilet paper at all in a train station restroom  
31          a flat tire halfway to Vegas.

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32          in the bottom of the hour  
33          lurks  
34          the dream of the barmaid as the perfect girl  
35          the first and only home run  
36          the father sitting in the bathroom with the door open  
37          the brave and quick death  
38          the gang rape in the Fun House.

39 in the bottom of the hour  
40 lurks  
41 the wasp in the spider web  
42 the plumbers moving to Malibu  
43 the death of the mother like a bell that never rang  
44 the absence of wise old men.

45 in the bottom of the hour  
46 lurks  
47 Mozart  
48 fast food joints where the price of a bad meal exceeds the hourly  
wage  
49 angry women and deluded men and faded children  
50 the housecat  
51 love as a swordfish.

52 in the bottom of the hour  
53 lurks  
54 17,000 people screaming at a homerun  
55 millions laughing at the obvious jokes of a tv comedian  
56 the long and hideous wait in the welfare offices  
57 Cleopatra fat and insane  
58 Beethoven in the grave.

59 in the bottom of the hour  
60 lurks  
61 the damnation of Faust and sexual intercourse  
62 the sad-eyed dogs of summer lost in the streets  
63 the last funeral  
64 Celine failing again  
65 the carnation in the buttonhole of the kindly killer.

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66 in the bottom of the hour  
67 lurks  
68 fantasies tainted with milk  
69 our obnoxious invasion of the planets  
70 Chatterton drinking rat poison  
71 the bull that should have killed Hemingway  
72 Paris like a pimple in the sky.

73 in the bottom of the hour  
74 lurks  
75 the mad writer in a cork room  
76 the falseness of the Senior Prom  
77 the submarine with purple footprints.

78 in the bottom of the hour  
79 lurks  
80 the tree that cries in the night  
81 the place that nobody found  
82 being so young you thought you could change it

83           being middle-aged and thinking you could survive it  
84           being old and thinking you could hide from it.

85           in the bottom of the hour  
86           lurks  
87           2:30 a.m.  
88           and the next to last line  
89           and then the last.

[Page 204]

Bukowski, Charles:the creative act [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems  
(1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           for the broken egg on the floor  
2           for the 5th of July  
3           for the fish in the tank  
4           for the old man in room 9  
5           for the cat on the fence

6           for yourself

7           not for fame  
8           not for money

9           you've got to keep chopping

10          as you get older  
11          the glamour recedes

12          it's easier when you're young

13          anybody can rise to the  
14          heights now and then

15          the buzzword is  
16          consistency

17          anything that keeps it  
18          going

19          this life dancing in front of  
20          Mrs. Death.

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Bukowski, Charles: a suborder of naked buds [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           the uselessness of the word is  
2           evident.  
3           I would like to make  
4           this  
5           piece of paper  
6           shriek and dance and  
7           laugh  
8           but  
9           the keys just  
10          strike it harmlessly  
11          and  
12          we settle  
13          for just a fraction of  
14          the whole.

15          this incompleteness is all  
16          we have:  
17          we write the same things  
18          over and over  
19          again.  
20          we are fools,  
21          driven.

22          the uselessness of the word is  
23          evident.

24          writers can only pretend to  
25          succeed  
26          some pretend well, others  
27          not so

28          yet none of us come  
29          near  
30          none of us even  
31          close

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32          sitting at these  
33          machines

34          behooved to  
35          live  
36          out



37           our indecent  
38           profession.

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Bukowski, Charles:companion [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           I am not alone.  
2           he's here now.  
3           sometimes I think he's  
4           gone  
5           then he  
6           flies back  
7           in the morning or at  
8           noon or in the  
9           night.  
10          a bird no one wants.  
11          he's mine.  
12          my bird of pain.  
13          he doesn't sing.  
14          that bird  
15          swaying on the  
16          bough.

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Bukowski, Charles:you know and I know and thee know [from The Last Night of the  
Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           that as the yellow shade rips  
2           as the cat leaps wild-eyed  
3           as the old bartender leans on the wood  
4           as the hummingbird sleeps  
  
5           you know and I know and thee know  
  
6           as the tanks practice on false battlefields  
7           as your tires work the freeway  
8           as the midget drunk on cheap bourbon cries alone at night  
9           as the bulls are carefully bred for the matadors  
10          as the grass watches you and the trees watch you  
11          as the sea holds creatures vast and true  
  
12          you know and I know and thee know

13 the sadness and the glory of two slippers under a bed  
14 the ballet of your heart dancing with your blood  
15 young girls of love who will someday hate their mirrors  
16 overtime in hell  
17 lunch with sick salad

18 you know and I know and thee know

19 the end as we know it now  
20 it seems such a lousy trick after the lousy agony but

21 you know and I know and thee know

22 the joy that sometimes comes along out of nowhere  
23 rising like a falcon moon across the impossibility

24 you know and I know and thee know

25 the cross-eyed craziness of total elation  
26 we know that we finally have not been cheated

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27 you know and I know and thee know

28 as we look at our hands our feet our lives our way  
29 the sleeping hummingbird  
30 the murdered dead of armies  
31 the sun that eats you as you face it

32 you know and I know and thee know

33 we will defeat death.

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the sun slants in  
like a golden sword  
as the odds grow  
shorter

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Bukowski, Charles:show biz [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           I can't have it  
2           and you can't have it  
3           and we won't  
4           get it

5           so don't bet on it  
6           or even think about  
7           it

8           just get out of bed  
9           each morning

10          wash  
11          shave  
12          clothe  
13          yourself  
14          and go out into  
15          it

16          because  
17          outside of that  
18          all that's left is  
19          suicide and  
20          madness

21          so you just  
22          can't  
23          expect too much

24          you can't even  
25          expect

26          so what you do  
27          is  
28          work from a modest

29           minimal  
30           base

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31           like when you  
32           walk outside  
33           be glad your car  
34           might possibly  
35           be there

36           and if it is---  
37           that the tires  
38           aren't  
39           flat

40           then you get  
41           in  
42           and if it  
43           starts---you  
44           start.

45           and  
46           it's the damndest  
47           movie  
48           you've ever  
49           seen  
50           because  
51           you're  
52           in it---

53           low budget  
54           and  
55           4 billion  
56           critics

57           and the longest  
58           run  
59           you ever hope  
60           for  
61           is

62           one  
63           day.

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Bukowski, Charles:darkness & ice [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1 I am spooked by the bluebells and the silent harp while  
2 passing down Western Avenue and seeing the tombstones  
3 placed flat instead of upright upon the cemetery lawn: our decent  
4 modernity not wanting to upset us with Finalities while we  
5 pay 22% interest on our credit cards.

6 I follow the street on down  
7 feeling wonderful that I do not appear to be lost.  
8 we need our landmarks (like cemeteries), we need our  
9 liquor and our liabilities.  
10 we need so many things we think we do not  
11 need.

12 strangely then, as I drive south, I begin thinking about  
13 THE WORLD IS SQUARE, INC., an institution which meets and  
14 discusses the fact that: the world is square and the North Pole is  
at  
15 the CENTER of the SQUARE and holds everything from sliding  
16 over the edge and that the EDGE is really a WALL OF  
17 DARKNESS AND ICE and that nothing or nobody can go through  
18 and that  
19 when we THINK we are circling the globe we are only  
20 CIRCLING the SQUARE, finally arriving back  
21 where we began.

22 I wait at a signal, the light turns green and I move on  
23 thinking, well, maybe the planets we believe are round are  
24 illusions, and the moon and the sun, they are really square  
25 too.

26 well, you can't rule anything out; I vote for round  
27 but I still realize that it wasn't too long ago when  
28 EVERYBODY thought the answer was SQUARE.

29 I stop at another signal, wait, while being held from falling  
30 over the EDGE OF DARKNESS AND ICE by the North Pole  
31 standing in the  
32 CENTER of the SQUARE.

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33 the light changes, I drive on, turn left, go a few blocks, turn  
34 right, go a block or so, turn left, go a block, turn right, then  
35 a left and I am at my driveway, turn in, drive slowly up to  
36 the garage  
37 past the tangerine tree and the tangerines are round but  
38 the garage door is square and I am still spooked by the  
39 bluebells and the silent harp

40 cut the engine  
41 get out  
42 stand up  
43 still alive.

44 I move along the walk.  
45 god, things are getting interesting again: they say there are  
46 bottomless craters at the North Pole and deep in the earth live  
47 Creatures from Outer Space  
48 down there  
49 in a marvelous, beautiful and peaceful Kingdom, I move toward the  
50 door, make ready to open it, not at all sure of what will be  
51 waiting on the other side---there is always this gnarling  
52 apprehension  
53 generally but not always warranted, and as the North Pole holds me  
54 from falling off either the Curve or the  
55 Edge  
56 I push open the wooden wall and enter, ready and not ready  
57 enough.

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Bukowski, Charles:the big ride [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1 all right,  
2 some day you'll see me in a plastic  
3 helmet, long stockings,  
4 double-lens goggles;  
5 I'll be tooling along on my 10-  
6 speed bike on the promenade,  
7 my face will be as intense  
8 as a canteloupe and  
9 in my knapsack  
10 there could be a  
11 bible, along with the  
12 liverwurst sandwich and  
13 the red red  
14 apple.

15 off to one side the  
16 sea will break and  
17 break  
18 and I will  
19 pump along---a  
20 well-lived  
21 man,  
22 lived a little, per-  
23 haps, beyond his  
24 sensibilities: too  
25 much hair in the  
26 ears, and face

27 badly shaven;  
28 there, my lips  
29 never again to  
30 kiss a  
31 virgin; I gulp in  
32 the salty air  
33 while being  
34 unsure of the  
35 time  
36 but almost sure

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37 of the  
38 place.

39 all right, gliding  
40 along  
41 girding up for the  
42 casket,  
43 the sun like a  
44 yellow glove to  
45 grab me  
46 I pass a group of  
47 young ones  
48 sitting in their  
49 convertible.

50 "Jesus Christ," I hear  
51 a voice, "do you  
52 know who that  
53 was?"

54 was?  
55 was?

56 why, you little  
57 fart bells!  
58 you bits of  
59 bunny  
60 droppings!

61 I kick it  
62 into high, I  
63 rise over a  
64 hill  
65 into a patch  
66 of fog,  
67 my legs  
68 pump and  
69 the  
70 sea  
71 breaks.

Bukowski, Charles: small cafe [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           you take a stool, unfold the paper, the waitress brings the  
2           java, you order bacon and  
3           everybody in there is old and bent and poor, they are like  
4           the oldest people in the universe  
5           having breakfast  
6           and it's dark in there like the inside of a glove  
7           and some of the patrons speak to each other,  
8           only their voices are broken and scratched and they speak  
9           of simple things,  
10          so simple  
11          you think that they are joking but  
12          they hulk over their food, unsmiling ...  
13          "Casmir died, he wore his green shoes ..."  
14          "yeh."

15          strange place there, no sadness, no rancor, an overhead  
16          fan turns slowly, one of the blades bent a bit, it  
17          clicks against the grate: "a-flick, a-flick, a-flick ..."  
18          nobody  
19          notices.

20          my food arrives, it is hot and clean, but never coffee  
21          like that (the worst), it is like drinking the water left in muddy  
22          footprints.

23          the old waitress is a dear, dressed in faded pink, she can  
24          hardly walk, she's  
25          sans everything.

26          "do you really love me?" she asks the young Mexican fry  
27          cook. "why?"

28          "because I can't help it," he says, running the spatula  
29          under a mass of hash browns, turning  
30          them.

31          I eat, peruse the newspaper, general idea I get is  
32          that the world is not yet about to end but a  
33          recession is to come creeping in wearing  
34          faded tennis  
35          shoes.



36 an old man looms in the doorway, he's big in all the  
37 wrong ways and shuts out what little light there  
38 is.

39 "hey, anybody seen Vern?"

40 there is no answer, the old man  
41 waits, he waits a good minute and a half, then he lets out a  
42 little fart.  
43 I can hear it, everybody can. uh  
44 huh.  
45 he reaches up, scratches behind his left ear, then backs out of  
46 the doorway and is  
47 gone.

48 "that ratfucker," somebody says, "zinned little Laura out of  
49 her dowry."

50 the last bit of toast sogs down my throat, I wipe my mouth, leave  
51 the tip, rise to pay the  
52 bill.

53 the cash register is the old fashioned kind where the  
54 drawer jumps out when you hit the  
55 keys.

56 I was the last person to sit down to eat, I am the first to  
57 leave, the others still sit  
58 fiddling with their food, fighting the coffee  
59 down

60 as I get to my car I start the engine, think,  
61 nice place, rather like an accidental  
62 love, maybe I'll go back there

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63 once or  
64 twice.

65 then I back out, swing around and enter the  
66 real world  
67 again.

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Bukowski, Charles:washrag [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           leaving for the track in the morning  
2           my wife asks me,  
3           "did you wring out your washrag  
4           properly?"

5           "yes," I say.

6           "you never do," she says,  
7           "it's important that you wring out  
8           your washrag  
9           properly."

10          I get into my car,  
11          start it,  
12          back out the drive.

13          of course, she's right, it is  
14          important.  
15          on the other hand  
16          I don't want to get into an  
17          argument over  
18          washrags.

19          she waves goodbye,  
20          I wave back,  
21          then I turn left,  
22          go down the hill.

23          it is a fine sunny  
24          day  
25          and great matters loom  
26          across the horizon  
27          of  
28          history.  
29          Carthage in my rearview  
30          mirror,  
31          I blend into  
32          Time.

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Bukowski, Charles:sitting with the IBM [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1       another still, hot summer night,  
2       the small insects circle my wineglass, my  
3       winebottle.

4       I once again consider my death  
5       as a Brahms symphony ends upon the  
6       radio.

7       the horses didn't run today (not  
8       here) but there was gunfire, murder,  
9       bombings in many parts of the  
10      earth.  
11      there is always a contest  
12      of sorts  
13      at hand.

14      and the years move slow and the years  
15      move fast and the years move  
16      past.

17      it seems not so long ago that  
18      old Henry Miller was still  
19      alive,  
20      always finding new young girls to dust  
21      his lampshades, pose for him, and make him  
22      nice little meals.  
23      what a ladies' man, he could never get  
24      enough of them.

25      anyhow, my 5 cats dislike the heat, they  
26      sit outside under the cool juniper bushes  
27      listening to me  
28      type.  
29      sometimes they bring me presents:  
30      birds or mice.  
31      then we have a little misunder-  
32      standing.

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33      and they back off  
34      looking at me  
35      and their eyes say: this guy's nuts,  
36      he doesn't know that this is the way  
37      it works.

38      another hot summer night as I sit here  
39      and play at being a writer  
40      again.  
41      and the worst thing  
42      of course

43 is that the words will never  
44 truly break through for any of  
45 us.

46 some nights I have taken the sheet  
47 out of the typer and  
48 held it over the cigarette  
49 lighter, flicked  
50 it and waited for the  
51 result.

52 "Hank, are you burning things again?"  
53 my wife will ask.

54 anyhow, there's another composer on the  
55 radio now  
56 and there is only so much he can do  
57 with his notes.  
58 I am proud for him and yet  
59 sad for him too.

60 the radio is old and dusty  
61 and through  
62 the speaker  
63 he talks to me.

64 it's as if he were hiding in there  
65 and I want to console him, say:

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66 "I am sorry, poor fellow, but  
67 creation has its  
68 limits."

69 another hot summer night  
70 another sheet of paper in this machine,  
71 more insects, more cigarettes in  
72 this place, this time, hurrah hurrah, lost  
73 in the grisly multitude of days  
74 the speaker in the radio vibrates, trembles  
75 as the composer swells out at me, the  
76 son of a bitch is good  
77 so brave despite his limitations  
78 as the cats wait under the juniper  
79 bushes and I pour more wine, more wine,  
80 more wine.

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Bukowski, Charles:my buddy, the buddha [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 I must wash this buddha that sits on my desk---  
2 dust and grime all over him  
3 mostly on his chest and belly; ah,  
4 we have endured many long nights together; we have  
5 endured trivia and horror; at unseemly times we  
6 have laughed  
7 cleanly---now  
8 the least he deserves is a good  
9 going over  
10 with a wet rag;  
11 truly terrible have been  
12 some long nights but  
13 the buddha has been good, quiet  
14 company; he never quite looks at me but  
15 he seems to be forever laughing---he's  
16 laughing at this muck of  
17 existence: there's nothing to be done.

18 "why clean me?" he now asks, "I will only dirty  
19 again."  
20 "I am only pretending at some dumb sanity," I  
21 answer.  
22 "drink your wine," he responds, "that's what  
23 you're good at."  
24 "and," I ask, "what are you good  
25 at?"  
26 he returns: "I am good at almost watching  
27 you."

28 then he becomes silent.  
29 he holds a circle of beads with a  
30 tassel.

31 how did he get in  
32 here?

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Bukowski, Charles:the interviewers [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 the interviewers come around  
2 and there is nothing that you can  
3 really  
4 tell them.

5           it's  
6           embarrassing  
7           and the easiest way out  
8           is to get yourself  
9           and them  
10          drunk.

11          sometimes there is also a  
12          camera man and a sound  
13          man  
14          and so it becomes a  
15          party with  
16          many bottles  
17          needed.

18          I don't think they want to  
19          hear the literary crap  
20          either.

21          it seems to work out all  
22          right:  
23          I get letters  
24          later:

25          "I really had a good  
26          time ..."

27          or: "it was the best time  
28          I ever had."

29          how strange, when all I  
30          remember

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31          of any particular night is  
32          saying goodbye at the  
33          door  
34          with: "don't leave  
35          anything behind so you  
36          have to  
37          come back."

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1 the lady down at the end of the bar keeps looking at  
2 me, I put my head down, I look away, I light  
3 a cigarette, glance again: she's still staring at me, she's  
4 charmingly dressed and she, herself, well, you might  
5 say she's beautiful.  
6 her eyes meld with mine; I am  
7 elated and nervous, then  
8 she gets up, goes to the ladies' room:  
9 such a behind!  
10 such grace!  
11 what a gazelle!

12 I glance at my face in the bar mirror, look  
13 away.

14 she's back; then the barkeep comes down: "a drink  
15 from the lady at the end of the bar."

16 I nod thanks to her, lift my drink, smile, have a  
17 hit.

18 she is looking again, what a strange and pleasur-  
19 able experience.

20 I look forward, examine the backs of my hands---not  
21 bad hands as far as hands go.

22 then, at once, it occurs to me:  
23 she has mistaken me for somebody  
24 else.

25 I leave my stool and slowly walk to the exit,  
26 and out into the night; I walk half a block down the  
27 boulevard, feel the need for a smoke, slip the  
28 pack of cigarettes out of my coat pocket, look  
29 curiously at the brand name (I did not purchase

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30 these): DEATH, it  
31 says.

32 I curse, hurl the pack into the street, move toward  
33 the next bar: knew it all along: she was a  
34 whore.

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Bukowski, Charles:the aliens [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           you may not believe it  
2           but there are people  
3           who go through life with  
4           very little  
5           friction or  
6           distress.  
7           they dress well, eat  
8           well, sleep well.  
9           they are contented with  
10          their family  
11          life.  
12          they have moments of  
13          grief  
14          but all in all  
15          they are undisturbed  
16          and often feel  
17          very good.  
18          and when they die  
19          it is an easy  
20          death, usually in their  
21          sleep.

22          you may not believe  
23          it  
24          but such people do  
25          exist.

26          but I am not one of  
27          them.  
28          oh no, I am not one  
29          of them,  
30          I am not even near  
31          to being  
32          one of  
33          them

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34          but they are  
35          there

36          and I am  
37          here.

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Bukowski, Charles: shock treatment [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           the fight I saw,  
2           after the tv cameras were  
3           shut off,  
4           a fighter in green  
5           trunks and  
6           a fighter in blue,  
7           only 50 to 75  
8           absolutely silent  
9           people  
10          remaining,  
11          you heard each  
12          blow  
13          land  
14          crushingly  
15          amid  
16          sweat, saliva  
17          blood,  
18          gasps of  
19          agony,  
20          drinks no longer  
21          served,  
22          all the lights  
23          on,  
24          thousands of  
25          empty  
26          seats,  
27          the bell rang  
28          to end the  
29          round,  
30          it clanged  
31          right through  
32          you  
33          as the boxers  
34          went back  
35          sat on their  
36          stools  
37          and were

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38          swabbed by  
39          listless  
40          cornermen.  
41          we were all  
42          in hell  
43          all of us  
44          and I  
45          got up  
46          and left  
47          that time.

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Bukowski, Charles:between races [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 I know that I'm not supposed to bother  
2 you, he said.

3 you've got that right, I  
4 answered.

5 but, he went on, I want to tell you  
6 that I was up all night  
7 reading your  
8 latest book.  
9 I've read all your  
10 books.  
11 I work in the  
12 post office.

13 oh, I said.

14 and I want to interview you for  
15 our newspaper.

16 no, I said, no  
17 interview.

18 why? he asked.

19 I'm tired of interviews, they have  
20 nothing to do with  
21 anything.

22 listen, he went on, I'll make it  
23 easy for you, I'll come to your  
24 house or I'll buy you dinner at  
25 Musso's.

26 no, thank you, I said.

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27 look, the interview isn't really for  
28 our paper, it's for  
29 me, I'm a writer and I want to get  
30 out of the post  
31 office.

32 listen, I said, just pull up a chair  
33 and sit down at your  
34 typewriter.

35 no interview? he asked.

36 no, I answered.

37 he walked  
38 off.

39 they were coming out on the track  
40 for the next race.

41 talking to the young man had  
42 made me feel  
43 bad.

44 they thought that writing had  
45 something to do with  
46 the politics of the  
47 thing.

48 they were simply not  
49 crazy enough  
50 in the head  
51 to sit down to a  
52 typer  
53 and let the words bang  
54 out.

55 they didn't want to  
56 write

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57 they wanted to  
58 succeed at  
59 writing.

60 I got up to make  
61 my bet.

62 no use letting a little  
63 conversation  
64 ruin your  
65 day.

Bukowski, Charles:splashing [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           dumb,  
2           Jesus Christ,  
3           some people are so dumb  
4           you can hear them  
5           splashing around  
6           in their dumbness  
7           as their eyes  
8           look out of their  
9           heads.  
10          they have  
11          most of their  
12          parts: hands, feet,  
13          ears, legs, elbows,  
14          intestines, fingernails,  
15          noses and so  
16          forth  
17          but  
18          there's nothing  
19          there  
20          yet  
21          they are able to  
22          speak,  
23          form sentences---  
24          but what  
25          comes out  
26          of their mouths  
27          are the stalest  
28          concepts, the most  
29          warped beliefs,  
30          they are the repository  
31          of all the obvious  
32          stupidities  
33          they have  
34          stuffed  
35          themselves  
36          with

37          and it hurts me  
38          to  
39          look at them  
40          to  
41          listen to them,  
42          I want to  
43          run and hide  
44          I want to  
45          escape their engulfing  
46          nullity

47           there is no  
48           horror movie  
49           worse,  
50           no murder  
51           as  
52           unsolved

53           but  
54           the world  
55           goes on  
56           and  
57           they  
58           go on

59           dumbly  
60           slamming  
61           my guts to  
62           pieces.

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Bukowski, Charles:darkling [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           some nights you don't sleep.  
2           of course  
3           having 3 or 4 cats on the bed  
4           doesn't help.  
5           my wife likes to carry them up  
6           from downstairs  
7           but  
8           it's not always the cats, it's  
9           hardly anything,  
10          say,  
11          re-working horse systems in my  
12          brain, or it's a cold moon, an  
13          itchy back, the  
14          thought of death out  
15          there  
16          beyond the venetian blinds  
17          or  
18          I'll think nice things about my  
19          wife, she looks so small there  
20          under the blanket, a little  
21          lump, that's all  
22          (death, you take me first, please,  
23          this lady needs a gentle space of  
24          peace  
25          without me).

26           then a boat horn blows from the  
27           harbor.  
28           I pull my head up, stretching  
29           my thick neck, I see the  
30           clock:  
31           3:36 a.m.  
32           that always does it: looking at  
33           the clock.  
34           by 3:45 a.m. I am asleep, just  
35           like the cats, just like my

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36           wife,  
37           the venetian blinds closing us  
38           all in.

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Bukowski, Charles:Celine with cane and basket [from The Last Night of the Earth  
Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           tonight I am nothing  
2           I have lost touch with the walls  
3           I have seen too many heads, hands, feet,  
4           heard too many voices,  
5           I am weary with the continuation,  
6           the music is old music,  
7           there is no stirring in the air.

8           on my wall is a photo of  
9           Celine,  
10          he has a cane,  
11          carries a basket,  
12          wears a coat too heavy,  
13          a long strand of hair falls across his face,  
14          he has been stunned by life,  
15          the dogs have had at him,  
16          it got to be too much  
17          much too much.

18          he walks through a small forest,  
19          this doctor,  
20          this typer of words,  
21          all he wants to do is die,  
22          that's all he wants,  
23          and his photo is on the wall  
24          and he is dead.

25          this year

26           1988  
27           all these months  
28           have had  
29           a terribleness to them  
30           that I have never felt  
31           before.

32           I light a cigarette and  
33           wait.

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Bukowski, Charles: no more, no less [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems  
(1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           editor, critic, bigot, wit:  
2           what do you expect of me  
3           now that my youth has  
4           flown and even my middle-  
5           age is  
6           gone?

7           I expect what I've always  
8           expected:  
9           the hard-driven line  
10          and a bit of help  
11          from the  
12          gods.

13          as the walls get closer  
14          there should be more to  
15          say  
16          instead of  
17          less.

18          each day is still a  
19          hammer,  
20          a flower.

21          editor, critic, bigot, wit:  
22          the grave has no  
23          mirror

24          and I am still this  
25          machine  
26          this paper  
27          and all the  
28          etceteras.

Bukowski, Charles: the lost and the desperate [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           it was nice to be a boy in a dark movie house,  
2           one entered the dream so much more easily  
3           then.  
4           I liked the French Foreign Legion movies  
5           best and there were many of them  
6           then.

7           I loved the forts and the sand and the  
8           lost and desperate men.  
9           these men were brave and they had beautiful  
10          eyes.

11          I never saw men like that  
12          in my neighborhood.  
13          the neighborhood men were hunched and  
14          miserable and angry and  
15          cowardly.

16          I was going to join the French Foreign Legion.

17          I sat in the dark movie houses and I was  
18          one of them.

19          we had been fighting for days without food  
20          and with very little  
21          water.

22          casualties had been horrendous.

23          our fort was surrounded, we were down to a  
24          last few.  
25          we propped up our dead comrades with  
26          their rifles pointed toward the  
27          desert  
28          to make the Arabs think that they had not  
29          killed many of us

30          otherwise we would have been  
31          overwhelmed.



32 we ran from dead man to dead man  
33 firing their rifles.  
34 our sergeant was wounded  
35 3 or 4 times but  
36 he still commanded  
37 screaming his orders.

38 then more of us died gallantly, then  
39 we were down to the last two  
40 (one of them the sergeant) but we  
41 fought on, then we were out of  
42 ammunition, the Arabs scaled the walls  
43 on ladders and we knocked them back  
44 with our rifle butts but more and more of  
45 them were clambering over the walls, there  
46 were too many  
47 of them we were  
48 finished, no chance, then there was the sound of a  
49 BUGLE!  
50 reinforcements were arriving!  
51 fresh and rested upon the backs of thunderous  
52 horses!  
53 they charged en masse over the sand,  
54 hundreds of them  
55 dressed in bright and blazing uniforms.  
56 the Arabs scattered down the walls  
57 running for their horses and their  
58 lives  
59 but most of them were  
60 doomed.

61 then the sergeant, knowing victory, was dying  
62 in my arms.  
63 "Chinaski," he said to me, "the fort is  
64 ours!"  
65 he gave a small smile, his head fell back and  
66 he was gone.

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67 then I was home again  
68 I was back in my room.  
69 a hunched, miserable and angry man  
70 walked into the room and said,  
71 "get out there now and mow the lawn.  
72 I see a hair of grass sticking up!"

73 out there in the yard  
74 I pushed the mower over the same grass  
75 once more  
76 back and forth  
77 back and forth  
78 wondering why all the brave men with

79 beautiful eyes were so far away,  
80 wondering if they'd still be there  
81 when I arrived.

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Bukowski, Charles:the bully [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1 actually, I do think that  
2 my father was  
3 insane,  
4 the way he drove his  
5 car,  
6 honking,  
7 cursing at people;  
8 the way he got into  
9 violent arguments  
10 in public places  
11 over the most  
12 trivial incidents;  
13 the way he beat  
14 his only child  
15 almost daily  
16 upon the slightest  
17 provocation.

18 of course, bullies  
19 sometimes meet their  
20 masters.

21 I remember once  
22 entering the house  
23 and my mother  
24 told me,  
25 "your father was  
26 in a terrible  
27 fight."

28 I looked for him,  
29 found him sitting  
30 on the toilet  
31 with the bathroom  
32 door  
33 open.

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34 his face was a mass of

35 bruises, welts,  
36 puffed and black  
37 eyes.  
38 he even had a broken  
39 arm  
40 in a cast.

41 I was 13 years old.  
42 I stood looking  
43 at him.  
44 I looked for  
45 some time.

46 then he screamed,  
47 "what the hell you  
48 staring at!  
49 what's your  
50 problem?"

51 I looked at him  
52 some more,  
53 then walked  
54 off.

55 it was to be  
56 3 years later  
57 that  
58 I would knock him  
59 on his  
60 ass, no problem  
61 with that  
62 at  
63 all.

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Bukowski, Charles:downers [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 some people  
2 grind away  
3 making their  
4 unhappiness  
5 the ultimate  
6 factor  
7 of their  
8 existence  
9 until  
10 finally  
11 they are

12           just  
13           automatically  
14           unhappy,  
15           their  
16           suspicious  
17           upset  
18           snarling  
19           selves  
20           grinding

21           on  
22           and  
23           at  
24           and  
25           for  
26           and  
27           through

28           their only  
29           relief  
30           being

31           to meet  
32           another  
33           unhappy  
34           person

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35           or  
36           to  
37           create  
38           one.

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Bukowski, Charles: get close enough and you can't see [from The Last Night of the  
Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           at this time  
2           I know a couple of men  
3           who seem to be in  
4           love  
5           while their ladies are treating  
6           them  
7           off-handedly or  
8           worse.

9           these men are consumed by

10           their  
11           ill-fate, can't  
12           climb out of their  
13           fix.

14           I too  
15           have been in that  
16           way,  
17           only I was  
18           worse  
19           off:  
20           I was charmed and  
21           ensnared by  
22           caseic beldames,  
23           slimey slatterns,  
24           inchoate prostitutes,  
25           hypacodont  
26           mesdames---  
27           all the hustling  
28           shrews of the  
29           universe  
30           found me,  
31           and I  
32           found them  
33           wise  
34           witty and

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35           beautiful  
36           then.

37           it was only after  
38           some luck of  
39           distance and time  
40           that I was able to  
41           realize  
42           that  
43           these ladies  
44           were even less than  
45           less.

46           so  
47           now  
48           when these men  
49           tell me their sad  
50           stories  
51           there is nothing I can  
52           say  
53           because to me  
54           their women look  
55           like  
56           hypacodont  
57           beldames,  
58           inchoate  
59           slatterns,  
60           caseic

61           mesdames  
62           and  
63           slimey  
64           prostitutes,  
65           not to mention  
66           piss-biting  
67           shrews

68           and they  
69           most  
70           probably  
71           are.

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72           true is true  
73           enough,  
74           yet  
75           at small  
76           tiny and  
77           rare  
78           moments

79           I wonder  
80           what  
81           I seemed  
82           like  
83           to my  
84           ladies?

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Bukowski, Charles:the beggars [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           the poor  
2           in the grandstand section  
3           playing the  
4           daily doubles  
5           the exactas  
6           the pick-6's  
7           the pick-9's

8           they have horrible  
9           jobs  
10          or  
11          no jobs

12           they come in  
13           beaten  
14           to take another  
15           beating.

16           scuffed shoes  
17           shirts with buttons  
18           missing,  
19           faded and wrinkled  
20           clothing---  
21           muted eyes,  
22           they are the  
23           unwashed  
24           the  
25           unwanted

26           the beggars of the  
27           grandstand

28           and as race after race  
29           unfolds  
30           they are routinely  
31           sucked of  
32           money and  
33           hope

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34           then  
35           the last race is  
36           over

37           and for a few  
38           there's the  
39           liquor  
40           store

41           a bit to drink  
42           and a  
43           lottery  
44           ticket.

45           for the  
46           others:  
47           nothing.

48           beggars of the  
49           grandstand.

50           the State is going  
51           to  
52           make it.

53           the track is going  
54           to  
55           make  
56           it

57           thanks to the  
58           Days of the Living  
59           Dead.

60           well,  
61           the horses are  
62           beautiful  
63           anyhow.

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Bukowski, Charles:the old horseplayer [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems  
(1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           he wears the same pants  
2           the same coat  
3           the same shoes  
4           day after day.

5           his shirttail hangs out.  
6           his shoes are unlaced.  
7           his hair is white and  
8           uncombed.  
9           he is balding.

10          he walks slowly to make his  
11          bets, then  
12          walks slowly back to his  
13          seat.

14          he watches each race  
15          without emotion.

16          he is hooked on nothing but  
17          an impossibility.

18          he is so tired.

19          the old horseplayer.



20           the skies, the mountains,  
21           music, nothing matters to  
22           him.

23           he's hooked on an  
24           impossibility.

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Bukowski, Charles:post time [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           some of the old rich still make it to  
2           Santa Anita Turf Club parking.  
3           and the old rich still buy Cadillacs---  
4           and he can barely drive the Caddy---  
5           and the valet helps them both  
6           out.  
7           he's fat and squat, very white, with  
8           merry blue eyes and she's taller,  
9           dignified but dumb, and her back is  
10          bent.  
11          expensively clothed  
12          they both move toward the Turf Club  
13          entrance  
14          where they are swallowed forever  
15          as the horn sounds to post  
16          and the number one horse steps out  
17          on the track  
18          more beautiful than all the people  
19          more beautiful than all the world  
20          and it  
21          begins.

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Bukowski, Charles:off and on [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           at times I still consider coughing it up: gas pipe, 19th floor  
2           window, 3 fifths of whiskey in 4 hours or  
3           slamming at 85 mph into a slab of  
4           concrete.

5           my first thought of suicide came at age 13 and it has

6           been with me ever since  
7           through all the botched failures:  
8           sometimes just rather playing at it, little minor  
9           rehearsals;  
10          other times  
11          really trying like hell to  
12          kill myself.

13          yet, now it's never totally intense, it's more like  
14          considering whether to go to a movie or  
15          not or whether to buy a new pair of  
16          shoes.  
17          actually, years go by and the suicidal thoughts  
18          almost completely  
19          abate.  
20          then  
21          suddenly  
22          they return, like:  
23          look here, baby, let's give it another  
24          shot.

25          and when it returns it's fairly  
26          compelling  
27          but not so much in the mind (as in the old  
28          days) but strangely, suicide waits in odd little places,  
29          on the back of your neck or  
30          at a spot just under the chin  
31          or along the arms like the sleeves of a  
32          sweater ...  
33          it used to hit the gut, now it's almost like

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34          catching a  
35          rash.

36          I will be driving along in my car with the radio  
37          on and it will leap at me and I will smile at  
38          it  
39          remembering the old days  
40          when those I knew thought that  
41          my daring crazy acts stemmed from  
42          bravery ...

43          I will drive for several hours  
44          up and down strange streets in  
45          strange neighborhoods  
46          at times  
47          slowing down carefully  
48          where children are playing in the  
49          road.

50          I will park  
51          go into cafes  
52          drink coffee

53 read newspapers.  
54 I will hear voices speaking of  
55 ridiculous and dull  
56 things.

57 I will be back in the car  
58 driving along  
59 and at once  
60 everything will lift:  
61 we all live in the same world:  
62 I will have to pay my gas bill, get a  
63 set of new reading glasses, I will need a  
64 new tire  
65 left rear  
66 and I think I've been using my neighbor's  
67 garbage can.

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68 it is fine to be normal again and  
69 as I pull into the driveway  
70 a large white moon smiles at me  
71 through the windshield of  
72 evening.

73 I brake, get out, close the car  
74 door, centuries of sadness, gladness and  
75 equilibrium will walk with me up to the door  
76 as I put in the key  
77 unlock it  
78 walk into the place  
79 once again having escaped the  
80 inescapable, I will move toward the  
81 kitchen cabinet for the  
82 bottle  
83 to  
84 celebrate  
85 that  
86 or  
87 whatever there is,  
88 isn't,  
89 will be,  
90 won't  
91 be---  
92 like right  
93 now.

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Sparrow Press]

1           today they shot a guy who was  
2           selling balloons at the  
3           intersection.

4           they parked their cars at the  
5           curbing  
6           and called him  
7           over.

8           he came  
9           over.

10          they argued with him about  
11          the price of a  
12          balloon, they wanted him  
13          to come down in  
14          price.

15          he said he couldn't.

16          one of them started calling  
17          him names.

18          the other took out a gun  
19          and shot him in the  
20          head.  
21          twice.

22          he fell  
23          right there  
24          in the street.

25          they took his balloons,  
26          said, "now we can  
27          party," and then they  
28          drove off

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29          there are also other guys  
30          at that intersection, they  
31          sell oranges  
32          mostly.

33          they left then  
34          and they weren't at the

35 intersection the next day  
36 or the next or  
37 the next.

38 nobody was.

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Bukowski, Charles: recognized [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1 I was at the airport  
2 standing at the arrival section  
3 with my wife  
4 waiting for her sister's  
5 flight in  
6 when a young man walked up:  
7 "aren't you Henry Chinaski?"  
8 "well, yes ..."  
9 "oh, I thought so!"  
10 there was a pause.  
11 then  
12 he continued: "you don't  
13 know what this  
14 means to me!  
15 I can't believe it!  
16 I've read all your books!"  
17 "thank you," I said, "I have to be  
18 thankful for my  
19 readers."  
20 he gave me his name and we  
21 shook hands.  
22 "this is my wife," I started ...  
23 "Sarah!" he said, "I know her  
24 from your books!"  
25 another pause.  
26 then:  
27 "I get all your books from Red  
28 down at Baroque ...  
29 I still can't believe it's  
30 you!"  
31 "it is," laughed my wife,  
32 "it's him!"  
33 "well," he said, "I'll leave you  
34 alone now!"  
35 "tell Red I said 'hello.'"  
36 then the young man  
37 moved off.

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38 "he was all right," I said,  
39 "I usually can't stand  
40 them."

41 "like you say, you have to  
42 be thankful for your  
43 readers."

44 "damned right ..."

45 then her sister's plane tooled  
46 up and we moved with the others  
47 to greet those we knew and those  
48 who knew  
49 us.

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Bukowski, Charles:them and us [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1 they were all out on the front porch  
2 talking:  
3 Hemingway, Faulkner, T. S. Eliot,  
4 Ezra Pound, Hamsun, Wally Stevens,  
5 e. e. cummings and a few others.

6 "listen," said my mother, "can't you  
7 ask them to stop talking?"

8 "no," I said.

9 "they are talking garbage," said my  
10 father, "they ought to get  
11 jobs."

12 "they have jobs," I  
13 said.

14 "like hell," said my  
15 father.

16 "exactly," I  
17 said.

18           just then Faulkner came  
19           staggering in.  
20           he found the whiskey in the  
21           cupboard and went outside with  
22           it.

23           "a terrible person,"  
24           said my mother.

25           then she got up and peeked out  
26           on the porch.

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27           "they've got a woman with them,"  
28           she said, "only she looks like a  
29           man."

30           "that's Gertrude," I  
31           said.

32           "there's another guy flexing his  
33           muscles," she said, "he claims he  
34           can whip any three of  
35           them."

36           "that's Ernie," I said.

37           "and he," my father pointed to me,  
38           "wants to be like them!"

39           "is that true?" my mother asked.

40           "not like them," I said, "but of  
41           them."

42           "you get a god-damned job,"  
43           said my father.

44           "shut up," I said.

45           "what?"

46           "I said, 'shut up,' I am listening to  
47           these men."

48 my father looked at his wife:  
49 "this is no son of  
50 mine!"

51 "I hope not," I said.

52 Faulkner came staggering into the room  
53 again.

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54 "where's the telephone?" he  
55 asked.

56 "what the hell for?" my father  
57 asked.

58 "Ernie's just blown his brains  
59 out," he said.

60 "you see what happens to men like  
61 that?" screamed my father.

62 I got up  
63 slowly  
64 and helped Bill find  
65 the  
66 telephone.

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Bukowski, Charles:luck was not a lady [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems  
(1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 being half-young I sat about the bars  
2 in it up to the ears  
3 thinking something might happen to  
4 me, I mean, I tried the ladies:  
5 "hey, baby, listen, the golden coast  
6 weeps for your beauty ..."  
7 or some such.

8 their heads never turned, they looked



9           ahead, straight ahead,  
10          bored.

11          "hey, baby, listen, I am a  
12          genius, ha ha ha ..."

13          silent before the bar mirror, these  
14          magic creatures, these secret sirens,  
15          big-legged, bursting out of their  
16          dresses, wearing dagger  
17          heels, earrings, strawberry mouths,  
18          just sitting there, sitting there,  
19          sitting there.

20          one of them told me, "you bore  
21          me."

22          "no, baby, you got it  
23          backwards ..."

24          "oh, shut up."

25          then in would walk some dandy, some fellow  
26          neat in a suit, pencil mustache, bow tie;  
27          he would be slim, light, delicate  
28          and so knowing  
29          and the ladies would call his

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30          name: "oh, Murray, Murray!"  
31          or some such.

32          "hi, girls!"

33          I knew I could deck one of those  
34          fuckers but that hardly mattered in the  
35          scheme of things,  
36          the ladies just gathered around Murray  
37          (or some such) and I just kept ordering  
38          drinks,  
39          sharing the juke music with them  
40          and listening to the laughter from  
41          the outside.

42          I wondered what wonderful things  
43          I was missing, the secret of the  
44          magic, something that only they knew,  
45          and I felt myself again the idiot in the  
46          schoolyard, sometimes a man never got out  
47          of there---he was marked, it could be told

48           at a glance

49           and so  
50           I was shut out,  
51           "I am the lost face of  
52           Janus," I might say at some  
53           momentary silence.  
54           of course, to be  
55           ignored.

56           they'd pile out  
57           to cars parked in back  
58           smoking  
59           laughing  
60           finally to drive off  
61           to some consummate  
62           victory

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63           leaving me  
64           to keep on drinking  
65           just me  
66           sitting there  
67           then the face of the  
68           bartender near  
69           mine:

70           "LAST CALL!"  
71           his meaty indifferent face  
72           cheap in the cheap  
73           light

74           to have my last drink  
75           go out to my ten year old car  
76           at the curb  
77           get in  
78           to drive ever so carefully  
79           to my rented  
80           room

81           remembering the schoolyard  
82           again,  
83           recess time,  
84           being chosen next to last  
85           on the baseball team,  
86           the same sun shining on me  
87           as on them,  
88           now it was night,  
89           most people of the world  
90           together.  
91           my cigarette dangling,  
92           I heard the sound of the

93           engine.

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Bukowski, Charles:the editor [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           he sat in the kitchen at the breakfastnook table  
2           reading the manuscripts writing a short rejection  
3           on each replacing the paperclip then  
4           sliding the pages back into the brown  
5           manila envelopes.

6           he'd been reading for an hour and thirty-five  
7           minutes and hadn't found a single poem

8           well he'd have to do the usual thing  
9           for the next issue: write the poems himself and  
10          make up names for the authors.

11          where was the talent?

12          for the last 3 decades the poets had  
13          flattened  
14          out it was like reading stuff  
15          from a house of  
16          subnormals.

17          but  
18          he'd save Rabowski  
19          for last

20          Rabowski had sent 8 or ten poems in a batch  
21          but always there were one or two  
22          good ones.

23          he sighed and pulled out the Rabowski  
24          poems.

25          he slowly read them he finished

26          he got up went to the refrigerator  
27          got out

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28           a can of beer cracked it sat back  
29           down

30           he read the poems all over again they were  
31           all bad even Rabowski had  
32           crapped out.

33           the editor got out a printed rejection slip  
34           wrote "you must have had a bad  
35           week."

36           then he slipped the poems back into the  
37           manila envelope sealed it tossed it  
38           on top of the pile for mailing

39           then he took the beer sat down next to his wife  
40           on the couch

41           she was watching Johnny Carson  
42           he watched

43           Carson was bad Carson knew he was bad but  
44           he couldn't do anything about  
45           it.

46           the editor got up with his can of beer and  
47           began walking up the  
48           stairway.

49           "where are you going?" his wife  
50           asked.

51           "to bed to sleep."

52           "but it's early."

53           "god damn it I know that!"

54           "well you needn't act that way  
55           about it!"

56           he walked into the bedroom flicked on  
57           the wall switch  
58           there was a small bright flash and then  
59           the overhead light burned  
60           out.

61           he sat on the edge of the bed and finished his  
62           beer in the  
63           dark.

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Bukowski, Charles: duck and forget it [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems  
(1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           today at the track  
2           I was standing alone  
3           looking down  
4           when I saw these  
5           two shoes  
6           moving directly  
7           toward  
8           me

9           at once  
10          I started into motion  
11          toward my right  
12          but he still caught part of  
13          me:

14          "making any money  
15          today?"

16          "yeah," I answered and  
17          was gone.

18          not too many years ago  
19          I would have stood  
20          there  
21          while this slipped  
22          soul  
23          unloaded his  
24          inaneities on  
25          me  
26          pissing over my day  
27          and my feelings  
28          as he made me pay  
29          for where he allowed  
30          himself to be

31           in his mind  
32           and in his  
33           life.

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34           no longer.

35           yet I am my brother's  
36           keeper.

37           I keep him  
38           away.

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Bukowski, Charles:snapshots at the track [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems  
(1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           I go to the men's crapper  
2           for a bowel  
3           movement,  
4           get up to flush.  
5           what the hell.  
6           something blood-dark  
7           falls upon the  
8           seat.  
9           I'm 70, I  
10          drink.  
11          have been on my deathbed  
12          twice.  
13          I reach down for what has  
14          fallen ...  
15          it's a small burnt  
16          potato chip  
17          from my  
18          lunch.  
19          not yet ...  
20          damn thing fell from my  
21          shirt ...

22          I finish my toiletry,  
23          go out and watch the  
24          race.  
25          my horse runs  
26          second  
27          chasing a 25-to-one  
28          shot  
29          to the  
30          wire.

31 I don't mind.

32 then I see this fellow  
33 rushing toward me,  
34 he always needs a  
35 shave, his glasses seem

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36 about to fall off  
37 his face,  
38 he knows me  
39 and maybe I know  
40 him.

41 "hey, Hank, Hank!"

42 we shake hands like two  
43 lost souls.  
44 "always good to see you,"  
45 he says, "it refreshes  
46 me, I know you lead a  
47 hard life  
48 just like I  
49 do."

50 "sure, kid, how you  
51 doing?"

52 he tells me that he is  
53 a big winner  
54 then  
55 rushes off.  
56 the big board  
57 overhead  
58 flashes the first odds  
59 on the next  
60 race.

61 I check my program  
62 decide to leave the  
63 clubhouse,  
64 try my luck in the  
65 grandstand,  
66 that's where a hard-  
67 living player belongs  
68 anyhow,  
69 right?

70 right.

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Bukowski, Charles:x-idol [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           I never watch tv so I don't know  
2           but I'm told he was the leading man in a  
3           long-running  
4           series.  
5           he does movie bits  
6           now  
7           I see him at the track almost every  
8           day ("I used to have women coming out of  
9           my ass," he once informed me).  
10          and people still remember him, call him  
11          by name and my wife often asks me, "did  
12          you see him today?"  
13          "oh yes, he's a gambling son of a bitch."

14          the track is where you go when the other  
15          action drops away.

16          he still looks like a celebrity, the way  
17          he walks and talks and  
18          I never meet him without feeling  
19          good.

20          the toteboard flashes.

21          the sky shakes.

22          the mountains call us home.

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Bukowski, Charles:heat wave [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           another one.  
2           this night the people sit drunk or drugged or some of them  
3           sit in front of their tv sets  
4           slapped silly.  
5           some few have air-conditioning.



6 the neighborhood dogs and cats flop about  
7 waiting for a better time.

8 and I remember the cars along the freeway today  
9 some of them stalled in the fast lane,  
10 hoods up.

11 there are more murders in the heat  
12 more domestic arguments.

13 Los Angeles has been burning for  
14 weeks.

15 even the desperately lonely have not phoned  
16 and that alone  
17 makes all this almost  
18 worthwhile:

19 those little mewling voices cooked into  
20 silence  
21 as I listen to the music of a long dead man  
22 written in the 19th  
23 century.

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Bukowski, Charles: we ain't got no money, honey, but we got rain [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 call it the greenhouse effect or whatever  
2 but it just doesn't rain like it  
3 used to.

4 I particularly remember the rains of the  
5 depression era.  
6 there wasn't any money but there was  
7 plenty of rain.

8 it wouldn't rain for just a night or  
9 a day,  
10 it would RAIN for 7 days and 7  
11 nights  
12 and in Los Angeles the storm drains  
13 weren't built to carry off that much  
14 water

15 and the rain came down THICK and  
16 MEAN and  
17 STEADY  
18 and you HEARD it banging against  
19 the roofs and into the ground  
20 waterfalls of it came down  
21 from the roofs  
22 and often there was HAIL  
23 big ROCKS OF ICE  
24 bombing  
25 exploding  
26 smashing into things  
27 and the rain  
28 just wouldn't  
29 STOP  
30 and all the roofs leaked---  
31 dishpans,  
32 cooking pots  
33 were placed all about;  
34 they dripped loudly  
35 and had to be emptied

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36 again and  
37 again.

38 the rain came up over the street curbings,  
39 across the lawns, climbed the steps and  
40 entered the houses.  
41 there were mops and bathroom towels,  
42 and the rain often came up through the  
43 toilets: bubbling, brown, crazy, whirling,  
44 and the old cars stood in the streets,  
45 cars that had problems starting on a  
46 sunny day,  
47 and the jobless men stood  
48 looking out the windows  
49 at the old machines dying  
50 like living things  
51 out there.

52 the jobless men,  
53 failures in a failing time  
54 were imprisoned in their houses with their  
55 wives and children  
56 and their  
57 pets.  
58 the pets refused to go out  
59 and left their waste in  
60 strange places.

61 the jobless men went mad  
62 confined with  
63 their once beautiful wives.  
64 there were terrible arguments  
65 as notices of foreclosure

66           fell into the mailbox.  
67           rain and hail, cans of beans,  
68           bread without butter; fried  
69           eggs, boiled eggs, poached  
70           eggs; peanut butter  
71           sandwiches, and an invisible

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72           chicken  
73           in every pot.

74           my father, never a good man  
75           at best, beat my mother  
76           when it rained  
77           as I threw myself  
78           between them,  
79           the legs, the knees, the  
80           screams  
81           until they  
82           separated.

83           "I'll kill you," I screamed  
84           at him. "You hit her again  
85           and I'll kill you!"

86           "Get that son-of-a-bitching  
87           kid out of here!"

88           "no, Henry, you stay with  
89           your mother!"

90           all the households were under  
91           siege but I believe that ours  
92           held more terror than the  
93           average.

94           and at night  
95           as we attempted to sleep  
96           the rains still came down  
97           and it was in bed  
98           in the dark  
99           watching the moon against  
100          the scarred window  
101          so bravely  
102          holding out  
103          most of the rain,  
104          I thought of Noah and the  
105          Ark

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106 and I thought, it has come  
107 again.  
108 we all thought  
109 that.

110 and then, at once, it would  
111 stop.  
112 and it always seemed to  
113 stop  
114 around 5 or 6 a.m.,  
115 peaceful then,  
116 but not an exact silence  
117 because things continued to  
118 drip  
119 drip  
120 drip

121 and there was no smog then  
122 and by 8 a.m.  
123 there was a  
124 blazing yellow sunlight,  
125 Van Gogh yellow---  
126 crazy, blinding!  
127 and then  
128 the roof drains  
129 relieved of the rush of  
130 water  
131 began to expand in  
132 the warmth:  
133 PANG! PANG! PANG!

134 and everybody got up  
135 and looked outside  
136 and there were all the lawns  
137 still soaked  
138 greener than green will ever  
139 be  
140 and there were the birds  
141 on the lawn  
142 CHIRPING like mad,

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143 they hadn't eaten decently  
144 for 7 days and 7 nights  
145 and they were weary of  
146 berries  
147 and  
148 they waited as the worms  
149 rose to the top,  
150 half-drowned worms.  
151 the birds plucked them  
152 up  
153 and gobbled them  
154 down; there were  
155 blackbirds and sparrows.  
156 the blackbirds tried to

157 drive the sparrows off  
158 but the sparrows,  
159 maddened with hunger,  
160 smaller and quicker,  
161 got their  
162 due.

163 the men stood on their porches  
164 smoking cigarettes,  
165 now knowing  
166 they'd have to go out  
167 there  
168 to look for that job  
169 that probably wasn't  
170 there, to start that car  
171 that probably wouldn't  
172 start.

173 and the once beautiful  
174 wives  
175 stood in their bathrooms  
176 combing their hair,  
177 applying makeup,  
178 trying to put their world back  
179 together again,  
180 trying to forget that

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181 awful sadness that  
182 gripped them,  
183 wondering what they could  
184 fix for  
185 breakfast.

186 and on the radio  
187 we were told that  
188 school was now  
189 open.  
190 and  
191 soon  
192 there I was  
193 on the way to school,  
194 massive puddles in the  
195 street,  
196 the sun like a new  
197 world,  
198 my parents back in that  
199 house,  
200 I arrived at my classroom  
201 on time.

202 Mrs. Sorenson greeted us  
203 with, "we won't have our  
204 usual recess, the grounds  
205 are too wet."

206 "AW!" most of the boys  
207 went.

208 "but we are going to do  
209 something special at  
210 recess," she went on,  
211 "and it will be  
212 fun!"

213 well, we all wondered  
214 what that would  
215 be

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216 and the two hour wait  
217 seemed a long time  
218 as Mrs. Sorenson  
219 went about  
220 teaching her  
221 lessons.

222 I looked at the little  
223 girls, they all looked so  
224 pretty and clean and  
225 alert,  
226 they sat still and  
227 straight  
228 and their hair was  
229 beautiful  
230 in the California  
231 sunshine.

232 then the recess bell rang  
233 and we all waited for the  
234 fun.

235 then Mrs. Sorenson told  
236 us:  
237 "now, what we are going to  
238 do is we are going to tell  
239 each other what we did  
240 during the rainstorm!  
241 we'll begin in the front  
242 row and go right around!  
243 now, Michael, you're  
244 first!..."

245 well, we all began to tell  
246 our stories, Michael began  
247 and it went on and on,  
248 and soon we realized that

249 we were all lying, not  
250 exactly lying but mostly  
251 lying and some of the boys

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252 began to snicker and some  
253 of the girls began to give  
254 them dirty looks and  
255 Mrs. Sorenson said,  
256 "all right, I demand a  
257 modicum of silence  
258 here!  
259 I am interested in what  
260 you did  
261 during the rainstorm  
262 even if you  
263 aren't!"

264 so we had to tell our  
265 stories and they were  
266 stories.

267 one girl said that  
268 when the rainbow first  
269 came  
270 she saw God's face  
271 at the end of it.  
272 only she didn't say  
273 which end.

274 one boy said he stuck  
275 his fishing pole  
276 out the window  
277 and caught a little  
278 fish  
279 and fed it to his  
280 cat.

281 almost everybody told  
282 a lie.  
283 the truth was just  
284 too awful and  
285 embarrassing to  
286 tell.

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287 then the bell rang  
288 and recess was  
289 over.

290 "thank you," said Mrs.

291       Sorenson, "that was very  
292       nice.  
293       and tomorrow the grounds  
294       will be dry  
295       and we will put them  
296       to use  
297       again."

298       most of the boys  
299       cheered  
300       and the little girls  
301       sat very straight and  
302       still,  
303       looking so pretty and  
304       clean and  
305       alert,  
306       their hair beautiful  
307       in a sunshine that  
308       the world might  
309       never see  
310       again.

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Bukowski, Charles:crime and punishment [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems  
(1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           Mr. Sanderson was the principal of  
2           my high school  
3           and it seemed that much  
4           of the time  
5           I was in Mr. Sanderson's  
6           office  
7           and I had no idea  
8           why.

9           the teacher would send me down  
10          with a sealed  
11          envelope.  
12          Mr. Sanderson would open the  
13          envelope  
14          read the enclosure  
15          and then look at  
16          me.

17          "well, here we are  
18          again!  
19          we just can't behave our-  
20          selves, can  
21          we?"



22 he always said the same  
23 thing.  
24 I rather liked the idea of  
25 being bad  
26 but I had no idea  
27 that I  
28 was.

29 I didn't protest  
30 because  
31 I thought that  
32 the teachers were  
33 stupid

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34 and that  
35 Mr. Sanderson was  
36 stupid  
37 so  
38 there was nobody  
39 to protest  
40 to.  
41 certainly not  
42 my parents  
43 who were more stupid  
44 than  
45 any of  
46 them.

47 "all right," Mr. Sanderson would  
48 say, "go into the phone booth,  
49 close the door  
50 and don't come out until I  
51 tell you  
52 to."

53 it was one of those  
54 glassed in phone booths with a  
55 little seat.  
56 all the times I sat there  
57 the phone never  
58 rang.  
59 and it was stuffy  
60 in there.  
61 all you could do in there  
62 was think  
63 and I didn't want to  
64 think.  
65 Mr. Sanderson knew that.  
66 there were magazines in  
67 there  
68 but they were all dull,  
69 fancy ladies  
70 magazines  
71 but I read them

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72           anyhow  
73           and that really made me  
74           feel bad  
75           which was what Mr.  
76           Sanderson wanted.

77           finally  
78           after one or two hours  
79           he would bang on the  
80           door with his big  
81           fist and yell, "ALL RIGHT,  
82           YOU CAN COME OUT OF THERE  
83           NOW  
84           AND I DON'T EVER WANT TO  
85           SEE YOU IN HERE AGAIN!"

86           but  
87           I'd be back  
88           many times

89           never knowing  
90           why.

91           finally  
92           like somebody doing  
93           time  
94           I got out of that  
95           high school  
96           and it was a couple  
97           of years later  
98           that I read  
99           in the newspaper  
100          that Mr. Sanderson  
101          had been  
102          prosecuted  
103          fined and  
104          jailed  
105          for  
106          embezzlement of

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107          school  
108          funds.

109          while I had been  
110          in that phone booth  
111          diddling with  
112          myself  
113          that son of a  
114          bitch  
115          had been making

116 his  
117 moves.

118 I felt like  
119 going down to  
120 the jail  
121 and dumping a  
122 bunch of  
123 Ladies' Home Journal  
124 on him  
125 but of course  
126 I didn't.  
127 I felt good enough  
128 about it  
129 just the way it  
130 was.

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Bukowski, Charles:the soldier, his wife and the bum [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 I was a bum in San Francisco but once managed  
2 to go to a symphony concert along with the well-  
3 dressed people  
4 and the music was good but something about the  
5 audience was not  
6 and something about the orchestra  
7 and the conductor was  
8 not,  
9 although the building was fine and the  
10 acoustics perfect  
11 I preferred to listen to the music alone  
12 on my radio  
13 and afterwards I did go back to my room and I  
14 turned on the radio but  
15 then there was a pounding on the wall:  
16 "SHUT THAT GOD-DAMNED THING OFF!"

17 there was a soldier in the next room  
18 living with his wife  
19 and he would soon be going over there to pro-  
20 tect me from Hitler so  
21 I snapped the radio off and then heard his  
22 wife say, "you shouldn't have done that."  
23 and the soldier said, "FUCK THAT GUY!"  
24 which I thought was a very nice thing for him  
25 to tell his wife to do.  
26 of course,  
27 she never did.

28           anyhow, I never went to another live concert  
29           and that night I listened to the radio very  
30           quietly, my ear pressed to the  
31           speaker.

32           war has its price and peace never lasts and  
33           millions of young men everywhere would die  
34           and as I listened to the classical music I

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35           heard them making love, desperately and  
36           mournfully, through Shostakovich, Brahms,  
37           Mozart, through crescendo and climax,  
38           and through the shared  
39           wall of our darkness.

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Bukowski, Charles: Bonaparte's Retreat [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems  
(1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           Fred, they called him.  
2           he always sat at the end of the  
3           bar  
4           near the doorway  
5           and he was always there  
6           from opening to  
7           closing.  
8           he was there more than  
9           I was,  
10          which is saying  
11          something.

12          he never talked to  
13          anybody.  
14          he just sat there  
15          drinking his glasses of  
16          draft beer.  
17          he looked straight ahead  
18          right across the bar  
19          but he never looked at  
20          anybody.

21          and there's one other  
22          thing.

23          he got up  
24          now and then  
25          and went to the

26           jukebox  
27           and he always played the  
28           same record:  
29           Bonaparte's Retreat.

30           he played that song  
31           all day and all night  
32           long.

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33           it was his song,  
34           all right.

35           he never got tired  
36           of it.

37           and when his draft beers  
38           really got to him  
39           he'd get up and play  
40           Bonaparte's Retreat  
41           6 or 7 times  
42           running.

43           nobody knew who he was or  
44           how he made  
45           it,  
46           only that he lived in a  
47           hotel room  
48           across the street  
49           and was the first customer  
50           in the bar  
51           each day  
52           as it  
53           opened.

54           I protested to Clyde  
55           the bartender:  
56           "listen, he's driving us  
57           crazy with that  
58           thing.  
59           eventually, all the other  
60           records are  
61           rotated  
62           but  
63           Bonaparte's Retreat  
64           remains.  
65           what does it  
66           mean?"

67           "it's his song,"  
68           said Clyde.

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69 "don't you have a  
70 song?"

71 well, I came in about one  
72 p.m. this day  
73 and all the regulars  
74 were there  
75 but Fred wasn't  
76 there.

77 I ordered my drink,  
78 then said out loud,  
79 "hey, where's  
80 Fred?"

81 "Fred's dead,"  
82 said Clyde.

83 I looked down at the end  
84 of the bar.  
85 the sun came through the  
86 blinds  
87 but there was nobody  
88 at the end  
89 stool.

90 "you're kidding me,"  
91 I said, "Fred's back in the  
92 crapper or  
93 something."

94 "Fred didn't come in this  
95 morning," said Clyde, "so  
96 I went over to his  
97 hotel room  
98 and there he  
99 was  
100 stiff as a  
101 cigar  
102 box."

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103 everybody was very  
104 quiet.  
105 those guys never said  
106 much  
107 anyhow.

108 "well," I said, "at least

109 we won't have to hear  
110 Bonaparte's Retreat  
111 anymore."

112 nobody said  
113 anything.

114 "is that record  
115 still in the  
116 juke?" I  
117 asked.

118 "yes," said  
119 Clyde.

120 "well," I said,  
121 "I'm going to play it  
122 one more time."

123 I got up.

124 "hold it,"  
125 said Clyde.

126 he came around the bar,  
127 walked to the  
128 juke  
129 box.

130 he had a little key  
131 in his  
132 hand.

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133 he put the key  
134 in the juke  
135 and opened  
136 it.

137 he reached in  
138 and pulled  
139 out a  
140 record.

141 then he took the  
142 record and  
143 broke it over

144 his  
145 knee.

146 "it was his  
147 song," said  
148 Clyde.

149 then he locked  
150 the juke,  
151 took the broken  
152 record  
153 behind the bar  
154 and  
155 trashed  
156 it.

157 the name of the  
158 bar  
159 was  
160 Jewel's.  
161 it was at  
162 Crenshaw and  
163 Adams  
164 and it's not  
165 there  
166 anymore.

[Page 300]

Bukowski, Charles:flat tire [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1 got a flat on the freeway  
2 11 a.m.  
3 going north  
4 I got over to the  
5 side  
6 a small strip  
7 on the freeway  
8 edge  
9 got out the jack  
10 and the  
11 spare  
12 went to  
13 work  
14 the big rigs  
15 going by  
16 blasts of air and  
17 noise  
18 shaking everything  
19 and to top it



20 all  
21 it was  
22 cold  
23 an icy  
24 wind  
25 and I thought,  
26 Jesus Christ, mercy,  
27 can I do this  
28 thing?  
29 this would be a  
30 good place to  
31 go crazy and  
32 chuck it all  
33 in

34 but I got the  
35 new wheel  
36 on,

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37 the old one  
38 in the trunk  
39 and then I was  
40 back in the  
41 car

42 I gunned it into  
43 the swirl of  
44 traffic  
45 and there I was  
46 like nothing  
47 had ever  
48 happened

49 moving along  
50 with everybody  
51 else

52 all of us  
53 caught up in our  
54 petty larcenies  
55 and our  
56 rotting  
57 virtues

58 I gunned it  
59 hard  
60 made the fast  
61 lane

62 pushed the  
63 button  
64 as my radio

65 antenna  
66 sliced into the  
67 sky.

[Page 302]

Bukowski, Charles: oh, I was a ladies' man! [from The Last Night of the Earth  
Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 you  
2 wonder about  
3 the time  
4 when  
5 you ran through women  
6 like an open-field  
7 maniac  
8 with this total  
9 disregard for  
10 panties, dish towels,  
11 photos  
12 and all the other  
13 accoutrements---  
14 like  
15 the tangling of  
16 souls.

17 what  
18 were you  
19 trying to  
20 do  
21 trying to  
22 catch up  
23 with?

24 it was like a  
25 hunt.  
26 how many  
27 could you  
28 bag?  
29 move  
30 onto?

31 names  
32 shoes  
33 dresses  
34 sheets, bathrooms

[Page 303]

35 bedrooms, kitchens  
36 back

37 rooms,  
38 cafes,  
39 pets,  
40 names of pets,  
41 names of children;  
42 middle names, last  
43 names, made-up  
44 names.

45 you proved it was  
46 easy.  
47 you proved it  
48 could be done  
49 again and  
50 again,  
51 those legs held  
52 high  
53 behind most of  
54 you.  
55 or  
56 they were on top  
57 or  
58 you were  
59 behind  
60 or  
61 both  
62 sideways  
63 plus  
64 other  
65 inventions.

66 songs on radios.  
67 parked cars.  
68 telephone voices.  
69 the pouring of  
70 drinks.  
71 the senseless  
72 conversations.

[Page 304]

73 now you know  
74 you were nothing but a  
75 fucking  
76 dog,  
77 a snail wrapped around  
78 a snail---  
79 sticky shells in the  
80 sunlight, or in  
81 the misty evenings,  
82 or in the dark  
83 dark.

84 you were  
85 nature's  
86 idiot,  
87 not proving but

88           being  
89           proved.  
90           not a man but a  
91           plan  
92           unfolding,  
93           not thrusting but  
94           being  
95           pierced.  
96           now  
97           you know.

98           then  
99           you thought you were  
100          such a  
101          clever devil  
102          such a  
103          cad  
104          such a  
105          man-bull  
106          such a  
107          bad boy

108          smiling over your  
109          wine

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110          planning your next  
111          move

112          what a  
113          waste of time  
114          you were

115          you great  
116          rider  
117          you Attila of  
118          the springs and  
119          elsewhere

120          you could have  
121          slept through it  
122          all  
123          and you would never  
124          have been  
125          missed

126          never would have  
127          been  
128          missed  
129          at  
130          all.

Bukowski, Charles:inactive volcano [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           the bartender at Musso's  
2           remembers me when  
3           I was  
4           in rags,  
5           used to  
6           lean on the wood  
7           with the  
8           worst and loudest of  
9           women  
10          and  
11          we would  
12          drink too much  
13          spill our drinks  
14          get  
15          nasty.

16          now  
17          I enter  
18          quietly with an  
19          interviewer  
20          a film director  
21          or some  
22          actor  
23          or  
24          with my wife  
25          and a gentle  
26          friend or  
27          two.

28          at times  
29          now  
30          I see the bartender  
31          looking at me  
32          and I know  
33          he's thinking  
34          of back then  
35          the way it

36          was  
37          and I look  
38          back at him  
39          and my eyes  
40          send the  
41          message:  
42          I'm just the  
43          same, friend, only

44 the circumstances  
45 have  
46 altered  
47 but  
48 I'm  
49 the same.

50 then I  
51 turn back  
52 to  
53 whomever  
54 I am with  
55 and they  
56 too  
57 seem to be  
58 thinking,  
59 when is he  
60 going to go  
61 crazy  
62 again?

63 nothing  
64 to do,  
65 friend,  
66 but  
67 wait  
68 and  
69 see.

[Page 308]

Bukowski, Charles:creative writing class [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems  
(1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 I'm guilty, I did take one  
2 in college  
3 and the first thing I realized was that  
4 I could beat the hell out of any  
5 2 or 3 people in there  
6 at once  
7 (physically  
8 I mean)  
9 and  
10 of course  
11 this was no way to measure  
12 creativity.

13 also  
14 I noticed that the professor's advice  
15 on what to do

16 and what not to do  
17 to become a writer was  
18 very pale and standard stuff  
19 that would lead to  
20 nowhere.

21 some of the students' work  
22 was read in class  
23 and I found it to be embarrassingly  
24 inept.

25 I sat alone in the back row with  
26 my scowl  
27 further noting that  
28 the men didn't look like men and  
29 the women didn't look like women.  
30 again  
31 no way to judge creativity.  
32 but what they produced  
33 looked like  
34 what they were.

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35 well  
36 at least the prof did give me  
37 "A's" on all the work  
38 I turned in  
39 but I got a "B" overall for  
40 poor attendance.

41 I also knew that  
42 every student in that class  
43 except one  
44 was  
45 creatively doomed.

46 and even that one  
47 would be 50 years old  
48 before even minor notice  
49 would be taken of  
50 his work.

51 a bit longer  
52 than even he  
53 had  
54 expected.

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Bukowski, Charles: cool black air [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           often from my typing room I step out onto this small  
2           balcony  
3           and there is the night  
4           a cool wash of black air.  
5           I stand in slippers, shorts and undershirt, sucking at  
6           a small cigarette, I can see the curling headlights of  
7           the cars on the winding Harbor Freeway.  
8           they come and come, those lights, they never stop  
9           and I truly wonder that life is still here  
10          after all these centuries, after the hell of  
11          all of our error and our smallness and our  
12          greed, our  
13          selfishness, our bitterness,  
14          life is still here  
15          and the thought of that makes me strangely  
16          elated.  
17          of course, I am woozy from hours of  
18          typing.

19          and now  
20          the same dog in that yard to the far left barks at me  
21          again.

22          he should know that old fart standing there in his shorts,  
23          he should know me by now.

24          I turn and walk back into my typing room.

25          the typewriter is electric and it is on and it  
26          hums hums hums hums.

27          last night I did something very odd: after ripping out  
28          a few poems  
29          I covered the machine  
30          then bent down and kissed it once, and said,  
31          "thank you, very much."

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32          after 50 years in the game I had finally thanked my  
33          typewriter.

34          now I sit down to it and I BANG IT, I don't use the light  
35          touch, I BANG IT, I want to hear it, I want it to do its  
36          tricks, it has saved my ass from the worst of women and the  
37          worst of men and the  
38          worst of jobs, it has mellowed my nightmares into a gentle



39           sanity, it has loved me at my lowest and it has made me  
40           seem to be a greater soul than I ever  
41           was.

42           I BANG IT I BANG IT

43           and I know how all of them felt, all the writers, when it was  
44           going good, when it was going hot.

45           death, I have chopped off your arms and your legs and your  
46           head.

47           I am sorry, I know you just do what you have to  
48           do

49           even to that barking dog

50           but now  
51           I BANG IT  
52           BANG IT

53           and wait.

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Bukowski, Charles:the jackals [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           as the years went on I seemed to have more luck  
2           but now these jackals  
3           these attackers from the past reappear as if  
4           nothing had ever  
5           occurred (one doesn't mind literary  
6           criticism so long as the envy and the rancor  
7           do not show through)  
8           and now I meet the jackals in eating  
9           places etc.  
10          some even come to the door  
11          bringing entire families---mothers, fathers,  
12          old aunts ...

13          the jackals turn on the charm  
14          and I don't mind, let the past be  
15          done, I pour the drinks and  
16          listen.

17       it is afterwards that it occurs, usually  
18       within a week:  
19       a large manuscript arrives with  
20       note: "could you read this?  
21       publisher would like a foreword from  
22       you ..."

23       I brace myself, flop on the bed, give it  
24       a read: the writing is proficient  
25       but somewhere there is a terrible  
26       lacking, an unnatural void ...  
27       the manuscript makes me a bit ill;  
28       I let it fall to the  
29       floor.

30       the other night I made a brief  
31       appearance at a theater where my  
32       video was showing and

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33       as I was leaving  
34       here came the poet, glass of  
35       cheap free wine in his hand, he  
36       poked his face into mine  
37       and repeated his same speech all  
38       over again as if he had forgotten  
39       he had given it  
40       to me before.

41       "remember me? we met at L's.  
42       there's this new mag starting, it's  
43       going to be better than Rolling  
44       Stone ...  
45       what they want me to do is  
46       interview you and you interview me,  
47       we get a thousand a-piece, maybe  
48       more ..."

49       (said jackal had attacked me in an  
50       article after begging me to go  
51       to the boxing matches with him.  
52       his face was continually  
53       in mine, talking, talking.  
54       "listen," I told him, "let's just  
55       watch the fights ..."  
56       he had told  
57       me he was there to cover the  
58       fights, but he wasn't: the  
59       article was about me: a  
60       terrible human being who was a  
61       drunk and far past his prime.)

62 now he kept shoving his face into  
63 mine there on the sidewalk,  
64 repeating his spiel: "I interview  
65 you, you interview me ... one  
66 thousand, what do you think, huh,  
67 huh?"

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68 "I'll let you know," I told  
69 him.

70 but he just kept walking along,  
71 pushing his face into mine ...

72 well, I thought, I am going to  
73 have to punch him out.

74 but I tried something else  
75 first:

76 "get the fuck away from me!"

77 he backed off and I walked off  
78 to a better place ...

79 give it a week, I came in from the  
80 track one evening and here was a  
81 large package: 3 of his latest  
82 books from a local press.  
83 I flipped through the pages:  
84 a breezy, bantering style  
85 playing the open, good  
86 human guy but it was like he  
87 was writing on benzedrine  
88 lashing you with shreds of his  
89 soul,  
90 but it was more boring-  
91 than derring-  
92 do.

93 there was a note with phone  
94 number, home address:  
95 "I'll interview you, you  
96 interview me, the editor thinks  
97 it's a great idea ... and there's a  
98 grand a-piece in it for each of  
99 us, maybe more ..."

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100 I walked into the kitchen and  
101 dumped him into the trash  
102 bag.

103 I fed the cats and then the phone  
104 rang.  
105 it was a new voice:

106 "Chinaski?"

107 "yes?"

108 "listen, you don't know me  
109 but my name is Dipper  
110 and I got a great deal for  
111 you."

112 "listen, how did you get my  
113 phone number?"

114 "hey, man, what difference  
115 does that make?"

116 I hung up.

117 in a moment the phone was ringing  
118 again.

119 I walked into the front room  
120 looked out the south window, it  
121 looked fine out there: trees, lawn,  
122 shrubbery,  
123 not a jackal in  
124 sight.

[Page 316]

Bukowski, Charles: warm light [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1 alone  
2 tonight  
3 in this house,

4           alone with  
5           6 cats  
6           who tell me  
7           without  
8           effort  
9           all that there  
10          is  
11          to know.

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4

Epigraph  
in the shadow of the rose

[Page 319]

Bukowski, Charles:Dinosauria, we [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           born like this  
2           into this  
3           as the chalk faces smile  
4           as Mrs. Death laughs  
5           as the elevators break  
6           as political landscapes dissolve  
7           as the supermarket bag boy holds a college degree  
8           as the oily fish spit out their oily prey  
9           as the sun is masked  
  
10          we are  
11          born like this  
12          into this  
13          into these carefully mad wars  
14          into the sight of broken factory windows of emptiness  
15          into bars where people no longer speak to each other  
16          into fist fights that end as shootings and knifings  
  
17          born into this  
18          into hospitals which are so expensive that it's cheaper to die  
19          into lawyers who charge so much it's cheaper to plead guilty

20 into a country where the jails are full and the madhouses closed  
21 into a place where the masses elevate fools into rich heroes

22 born into this  
23 walking and living through this  
24 dying because of this  
25 muted because of this  
26 castrated  
27 debauched  
28 disinherited  
29 because of this  
30 fooled by this  
31 used by this  
32 pissed on by this  
33 made crazy and sick by this  
34 made violent

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35 made inhuman  
36 by this

37 the heart is blackened  
38 the fingers reach for the throat  
39 the gun  
40 the knife  
41 the bomb  
42 the fingers reach toward an unresponsive god

43 the fingers reach for the bottle  
44 the pill  
45 the powder

46 we are born into this sorrowful deadliness  
47 we are born into a government 60 years in debt  
48 that soon will be unable to even pay the interest on that debt  
49 and the banks will burn  
50 money will be useless  
51 there will be open and unpunished murder in the streets  
52 it will be guns and roving mobs  
53 land will be useless  
54 food will become a diminishing return  
55 nuclear power will be taken over by the many  
56 explosions will continually shake the earth  
57 radiated robot men will stalk each other  
58 the rich and the chosen will watch from space platforms  
59 Dante's Inferno will be made to look like a children's playground

60 the sun will not be seen and it will always be night  
61 trees will die  
62 all vegetation will die  
63 radiated men will eat the flesh of radiated men  
64 the sea will be poisoned  
65 the lakes and rivers will vanish  
66 rain will be the new gold

67           the rotting bodies of men and animals will stink in the dark wind  
68           the last few survivors will be overtaken by new and hideous diseases

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69           and the space platforms will be destroyed by attrition  
70           the petering out of supplies  
71           the natural effect of general decay  
  
72           and there will be the most beautiful silence never heard  
  
73           born out of that.  
  
74           the sun still hidden there  
  
75           awaiting the next chapter.

[Page 322]

Bukowski, Charles:cut while shaving [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems  
(1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           It's never quite right, he said, the way the people look,  
2           the way the music sounds, the way the words are  
3           written.  
4           it's never quite right, he said, all the things we are  
5           taught, all the loves we chase, all the deaths we  
6           die, all the lives we live,  
7           they are never quite right,  
8           they are hardly close to right,  
9           these lives we live  
10          one after the other,  
11          piled there as history,  
12          the waste of the species,  
13          the crushing of the light and the way,  
14          it's not quite right,  
15          it's hardly right at all  
16          he said.  
  
17          don't I know it? I  
18          answered.

19 I walked away from the mirror.  
20 it was morning, it was afternoon, it was  
21 night

22 nothing changed  
23 it was locked in place.  
24 something flashed, something broke, something  
25 remained.

26 I walked down the stairway and  
27 into it.

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Bukowski, Charles: a good job [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1 some jobs you like,  
2 there is a clean gentle  
3 feel to some of them,  
4 like the one I had  
5 unloading boxcars  
6 of frozen  
7 fish.

8 the fish came packed  
9 in coffin-sized boxes,  
10 beautifully  
11 heavy and  
12 almost  
13 unyielding.  
14 you had thick gloves  
15 and a hook  
16 and you gaffed the  
17 damned thing  
18 and pulled it along  
19 the floor and slid it  
20 outside and onto the  
21 waiting  
22 truck.

23 and strangely there  
24 was no foreman,  
25 they just turned us  
26 loose in there  
27 knowing we'd get  
28 it done.

29 we were always



30 sending out one of  
31 the fellows for another  
32 bottle of  
33 wine.  
34 it was slippery and

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35 cold in those  
36 boxcars

37 we yanked out those  
38 iced fish,  
39 drank the wine  
40 and the bullshit  
41 flew.  
42 there was a  
43 fight or two  
44 but nothing really  
45 violent.  
46 I was the peace-  
47 maker.

48 "come on, fuck  
49 that stuff!  
50 let's get these  
51 fish out of  
52 here!  
53 yeah!"

54 then we'd be  
55 laughing and  
56 bullshitting  
57 again.

58 toward evening  
59 we all got quiet.  
60 the fish seemed to  
61 get heavier and  
62 heavier.  
63 shins got cracked,  
64 knees  
65 bruised  
66 and the wine  
67 settled heavily  
68 into our  
69 guts.

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70 by the time you  
71 got to your last box  
72 you bullied it  
73 out of there

74 strictly on nerve  
75 alone.

76 when you punched  
77 out  
78 even the timecard  
79 seemed  
80 heavy.

81 and then you were  
82 in your old car  
83 moving toward  
84 your place,  
85 your shackjob,  
86 wondering  
87 whether good times  
88 or hell  
89 awaited  
90 you.

91 but the frozen fish  
92 you had  
93 worked,  
94 that thought was  
95 pleasant and  
96 soothing,  
97 and you'd be back  
98 for more,  
99 hooking the wood  
100 and dragging.

101 the night came  
102 on and you flicked  
103 the headlights  
104 on

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105 and the world was  
106 good enough,  
107 right  
108 then.

[Page 327]

Bukowski, Charles: last seat at the end [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems  
(1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 I was always studying the wood of the  
2 bar, the grains, the scratches, the

3 cigarette burns.  
4 there was something there but I  
5 couldn't quite figure what it  
6 was  
7 and that kept me going.

8 another one was to look at my  
9 hand around the  
10 glass.  
11 there is something about  
12 one's hand about a  
13 glass that is gently  
14 fascinating.

15 and, of course, there is this one:  
16 all drunks do it:  
17 taking your thumbnail and slowly  
18 ripping off the label  
19 on a bottle of beer that has been  
20 soaking in the icewater.

21 smoking cigarettes is a good show  
22 too, especially in the early morning  
23 hours with the Venetian blinds at  
24 your back,  
25 the smoke curls up and forms its  
26 divergent patterns.  
27 this gives one the feeling of  
28 peace  
29 and really so, more so,  
30 if there is one of your favorite  
31 old songs  
32 emanating from the  
33 juke.

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34 and if the bartender was old  
35 and a little tired and a little bit  
36 wise  
37 it was good to see where he  
38 was or what he was doing---  
39 washing glasses or leaning  
40 against the counter or  
41 sneaking a quick  
42 shot  
43 or whatever he was doing  
44 it was always nice to just  
45 see a bit of him,  
46 to take note of the white  
47 shirt.  
48 the white shirt was an  
49 important backdrop to  
50 drink to and  
51 with.

52           also you listened to the  
53           traffic going by,  
54           car by car.  
55           it was not a deliberate  
56           listening---more an off-  
57           hand  
58           one.  
59           and it was best when  
60           it had rained  
61           and you could hear the  
62           tires on the  
63           wet street.

64           the bar was the best  
65           place to hide in.  
66           time came under your  
67           control, time to wade  
68           in, time to do nothing  
69           in.

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70           no guru was needed,  
71           no god.

72           nothing expected but  
73           yourself  
74           and nothing lost  
75           to the  
76           unexpected.

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Bukowski, Charles:my uncle Jack [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           my uncle Jack  
2           is a mouse  
3           is a house on fire  
4           is a war about to begin  
5           is a man running down the street with a knife in his back.

6           my uncle Jack  
7           is the Santa Monica pier  
8           is a dusty blue pillow  
9           is a scratching black-and-white dog  
10          is a man with one arm lighting a cigarette with one hand.

11 my uncle Jack  
12 is a slice of burnt toast  
13 is the place you forgot to look for the key  
14 is the pleasure of finding 3 rolls of toilet paper in the closet  
15 is the worst dream you've ever had that you can't remember.

16 my uncle Jack  
17 is the firecracker that went off in your hand  
18 is your run-over cat dead outside your driveway at 10:30 a.m.  
19 is the crap game you won in the Santa Anita parking lot  
20 is the man your woman left you for that night in the cheap hotel  
21 room.

22 my uncle Jack  
23 is your uncle Jack  
24 is death coming like a freight train  
25 is a clown with weeping eyes  
26 is your car jack and your fingernails and the scream of the biggest  
27 mountain now.

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Bukowski, Charles: the area of pause [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems  
(1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 you have to have it or the walls will close  
2 in.  
3 you have to give everything up, throw it  
4 away, everything away.  
5 you have to look at what you look at  
6 or think what you think  
7 or do what you do  
8 or  
9 don't do  
10 without considering personal  
11 advantage  
12 without accepting guidance.

13 people are worn away with  
14 striving,  
15 they hide in common  
16 habits.  
17 their concerns are herd  
18 concerns.

19 few have the ability to stare  
20 at an old shoe for  
21 ten minutes  
22 or to think of odd things  
23 like who invented the

24           doorknob?

25           they become unalive  
26           because they are unable to  
27           pause  
28           undo themselves  
29           unkink  
30           unsee  
31           unlearn  
32           roll clear.

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33           listen to their untrue  
34           laughter, then  
35           walk  
36           away.

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Bukowski, Charles:my first computer poem [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems  
(1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           have I gone the way of the deathly death?  
2           will this machine finish me  
3           where booze and women and poverty  
4           have not?

5           is Whitman laughing at me from his grave?  
6           does Creeley care?

7           is this properly spaced?  
8           am I?

9           will Ginsberg howl?

10          soothe me!

11          get me lucky!

12          get me good!

13          get me going!

14 I am a virgin again.  
15 a 70 year old virgin.  
16 don't fuck me, machine  
17 do.  
18 who cares?  
19 talk to me, machine!  
20 we can drink together.  
21 we can have fun.  
22 think of all the people who will hate me at this  
23 computer.

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24 we'll add them to the others  
25 and continue right  
26 on.  
27 so this is the beginning  
28 not the  
29 end.

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Bukowski, Charles: Rossini, Mozart and Shostakovich [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 are who I will hear tonight  
2 after reading about the death of Red Grange.  
3 my wife and I ate at a Japanese restaurant tonight  
4 and I told her that Red Grange had died.  
5 I had red bean ice cream for dessert.  
6 my wife declined.  
7 the war was still on in the Gulf.  
8 we got into the car and I drove us back here.  
9 now I am listening to Rossini  
10 who died before Red Grange.  
11 now the audience is applauding.  
12 now the players are readying for Mozart.  
13 Red Grange got a hell of a write-up in the papers.  
14 now Mozart is beginning.

15 I am smoking a small cigarette imported from India.  
16 4 of my 6 cats are asleep in the next room.  
17 my wife is downstairs.  
18 outside it is a cold, still winter night.  
19 I blow smoke into the desk lamp and watch it curl.  
20 Mozart is doing very well.  
21 Shostakovich is getting ready.  
22 it is a late Tuesday evening.  
23 and Red Grange is dead.

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Bukowski, Charles: it's a shame [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 a great mind and a good body seldom go  
2 together.  
3 or a great body and a good  
4 mind.  
5 or a great body and a great  
6 mind.

7 but worse, a not so good mind and a  
8 not so good body often go  
9 together.

10 in fact, that's almost the entire  
11 populace.  
12 and all these  
13 reproducing more of  
14 themselves.

15 is there any wonder why the world  
16 is where it's at  
17 now?

18 just notice the creature sitting near you  
19 in a movie house  
20 or standing ahead of you in a  
21 supermarket line.  
22 or giving a State of the Union  
23 Address.

24 that the gods have let us go on  
25 this long  
26 this badly.

27 as the snail comes crawling home



28           to manna.

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Bukowski, Charles: what a writer [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           what I liked about e. e. cummings  
2           was that he cut away from  
3           the holiness of the  
4           word  
5           and with charm  
6           and gamble  
7           gave us lines  
8           that sliced through the  
9           dung.

10          how it was needed!  
11          how we were withering  
12          away  
13          in the old  
14          tired  
15          manner.

16          of course, then came all  
17          the  
18          e. e. cummings  
19          copyists.  
20          they copied him then  
21          as the others had  
22          copied Keats, Shelley,  
23          Swinburne, Byron, et  
24          al.

25          but there was only  
26          one  
27          e. e. cummings.  
28          of course.

29          one sun.

30          one moon.

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31          one poet,  
32          like

33           that.

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Bukowski, Charles:hangovers [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           I've probably had about more of them  
2           than any person alive  
3           and they haven't killed me  
4           yet  
5           but some of those mornings felt  
6           awfully near  
7           death.

8           as you know, the worst drinking is done  
9           on an empty stomach, while smoking  
10          heavily and downing many different  
11          types of  
12          libations.

13          and the worst hangovers are when you  
14          awaken in your car or in a strange room  
15          or in an alley or in jail.

16          the worst hangovers are when you  
17          awaken to realize that you have done  
18          something absolutely vile, ignorant and  
19          possibly dangerous the night before  
20          but  
21          you can't quite remember what it  
22          was.

23          and you awaken in various states of  
24          disorder---parts of your body  
25          damaged, your money missing  
26          and/or possibly and often your  
27          car, if you had one.

28          you might place a telephone call to  
29          a lady, if you were with one, most  
30          often to have her slam the phone  
31          down on you.  
32          or, if she is next to you then,

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33          to feel her bristling and outrageous  
34          anger.

35           drunks are never forgiven.

36           but drunks will forgive themselves  
37           because they need to drink  
38           again.

39           it takes an ungodly durability to  
40           be a drinking person for many  
41           decades.

42           your drinking companions are  
43           killed by it.  
44           you yourself are in and out of  
45           hospitals  
46           where the warning often is:  
47           "One more drink will kill  
48           you."  
49           but  
50           you beat that  
51           by taking more than one more  
52           drink.

53           and as you near three quarters of  
54           a century in age  
55           you find that it takes more and more  
56           booze to get you  
57           drunk.

58           and the hangovers are worse,  
59           the recovery stage is  
60           longer.

61           and the most remarkably stupid  
62           thing is  
63           that you are not displeased that  
64           you have done it  
65           all

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66           and that you are still  
67           doing it.

68           I am typing this now  
69           under the yoke of one of my  
70           worst hangovers  
71           while downstairs now  
72           sit various and sundry  
73           bottles of  
74           alcohol.

75           it's all been so beastly  
76           lovely,  
77           this mad river,  
78           this gouging  
79           plundering  
80           madness  
81           that I would wish upon  
82           nobody  
83           but myself,  
84           amen.

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Bukowski, Charles:they are everywhere [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems  
(1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           the tragedy-sniffers are all  
2           about.  
3           they get up in the morning  
4           and begin to find things  
5           wrong  
6           and they fling themselves  
7           into a rage about  
8           it,  
9           a rage that lasts until  
10          bedtime,  
11          where even there  
12          they twist in their  
13          insomnia,  
14          not able to rid their  
15          minds  
16          of the petty obstacles  
17          they have  
18          encountered.

19          they feel set against,  
20          it's a plot.  
21          and by being constantly  
22          angry they feel that  
23          they are constantly  
24          right.

25          you see them in traffic  
26          honking wildly  
27          at the slightest  
28          infraction,  
29          cursing,  
30          spewing their  
31          invectives.

32           you feel them  
33           in lines  
34           at banks

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35           at supermarkets  
36           at movies,  
37           they are pressing  
38           at your back  
39           walking on your  
40           heels,  
41           they are impatient to  
42           a fury.

43           they are everywhere  
44           and into  
45           everything,  
46           these violently  
47           unhappy  
48           souls.

49           actually they are  
50           frightened,  
51           never wanting to be  
52           wrong  
53           they lash out  
54           incessantly ...  
55           it is a malady  
56           an illness of  
57           that  
58           breed.

59           the first one  
60           I saw like that  
61           was my  
62           father

63           and since then  
64           I have seen a  
65           thousand  
66           fathers,  
67           ten thousand  
68           fathers  
69           wasting their lives  
70           in hatred,

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71           tossing their lives  
72           into the  
73           cesspool  
74           and  
75           ranting  
76           on.

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Bukowski, Charles:war [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           war, war, war,  
2           the yellow monster,  
3           the eater of mind  
4           and body.  
5           war,  
6           the indescribable,  
7           the pleasure of  
8           the mad,  
9           the final argument  
10          of  
11          ungrown men.

12          does it belong?

13          do we?

14          as we approach  
15          the last flash of  
16          our chance.

17          one flower left.

18          one second.

19          breathing like this.

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Bukowski, Charles:the idiot [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           I believe the thought came to me  
2           when I was about eleven years  
3           old:  
4           I'll become an idiot.

5 I had noticed some in the neigh-  
6 borhood,  
7 those who the people called  
8 "idiots."

9 although looked down upon,  
10 the idiots seemed to have the  
11 more peaceful lives:  
12 nothing was expected of  
13 them.

14 I imagined myself standing upon  
15 streetcorners, hands in pockets,  
16 and drooling a bit at the  
17 mouth.

18 nobody would bother  
19 me.

20 I began to put my plan into  
21 effect.

22 I was first noticed in the  
23 school yards.  
24 my mates jibed at me,  
25 taunted me.

26 even my father noticed:  
27 "you act like a god damned  
28 idiot!"

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29 one of my teachers noticed,  
30 Mrs. Gredis of the long silken  
31 legs.

32 she kept me after  
33 class.

34 "what is it, Henry?  
35 you can tell me ..."

36 she put her arms  
37 about me  
38 and I rested myself  
39 against  
40 her.

41 "tell me, Henry, don't  
42 be afraid ..."

43 I didn't say  
44 anything.

45 "you can stay here  
46 as long as you  
47 want, Henry.  
48 you don't have to  
49 talk ..."

50 she kissed me on the  
51 forehead  
52 and I reached down  
53 and lightly touched  
54 one of her silken  
55 legs.

56 Mrs. Gredis was a  
57 hot number.

58 she kept me after  
59 school almost every  
60 day.

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61 and everybody hated  
62 me  
63 but I believe that I  
64 had the most wonderful  
65 hard-ons  
66 of any eleven year old  
67 boy  
68 in the city of  
69 Los Angeles

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Bukowski, Charles: this rejoinder [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1 the people survive to come up with flat fists full  
2 of nothing.



3 I remember Carl Sandburg's poem, "The  
4 People, Yes."  
5 nice thought but completely inaccurate:  
6 the people did not survive through a noble  
7 strength but through lie, compromise and  
8 guile.  
9 I lived with these people, I am not so sure  
10 what people Sandburg lived  
11 with.  
12 but his poem always pissed me off.  
13 it was a poem that lied.  
14 it is "The People, No."  
15 then and now.  
16 and it doesn't take a misanthrope to  
17 say this.

18 let us hope that future famous poems  
19 such as Mr. Sandburg's  
20 make more  
21 sense.

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Bukowski, Charles: Hemingway never did this [from The Last Night of the Earth  
Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 I read that he lost a suitcase full of manuscripts on a  
2 train and that they never were recovered.  
3 I can't match the agony of this  
4 but the other night I wrote a 3-page poem  
5 upon this computer  
6 and through my lack of diligence and  
7 practice  
8 and by playing around with commands  
9 on the menu  
10 I somehow managed to erase the poem  
11 forever.  
12 believe me, such a thing is difficult to do  
13 even for a novice  
14 but i somehow managed to do  
15 it.

16 now I don't think this 3-pager was immor-  
17 tal  
18 but there were some crazy wild lines,  
19 now gone forever.  
20 it bothers more than a touch, it's some-  
21 thing like knocking over a good bottle of  
22 wine.

23 and writing about it hardly makes a good

24 poem.  
25 still, I thought somehow you'd like to  
26 know?

27 if not, at least you've read this far  
28 and there could be better work  
29 down the line.

30 let's hope so, for your sake  
31 and  
32 mine.

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Bukowski, Charles:surprise time again [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems  
(1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 it's always a surprise to some  
2 when the killer is that clean-cut  
3 quiet boy with the gentle smile  
4 who went to church  
5 and was nearly a straight-A  
6 student  
7 and also good on the athletic  
8 field,  
9 kind to his elders,  
10 adored by the young girls,  
11 the old ones,  
12 admired by his  
13 peers.

14 "I can't believe he did it ..."

15 they always think a killer must  
16 be ugly, gross, unlikable,  
17 that he must give off signs,  
18 signals of anger and  
19 madness.

20 sometimes these kill  
21 too.

22 but a potential killer can never  
23 be judged by his  
24 externals

25 nor a politician, a priest or

26           a poet.

27           or the dog  
28           or the woman  
29           wagging  
30           tails.

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31           the killer sits anywhere  
32           like you  
33           as you read this

34           wondering.

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Bukowski, Charles: young in New Orleans [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems  
(1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           starving there, sitting around the bars,  
2           and at night walking the streets for  
3           hours,  
4           the moonlight always seemed fake  
5           to me, maybe it was,  
6           and in the French Quarter I watched  
7           the horses and buggies going by,  
8           everybody sitting high in the open  
9           carriages, the black driver, and in  
10          back the man and the woman,  
11          usually young and always white.  
12          and I was always white.  
13          and hardly charmed by the  
14          world.  
15          New Orleans was a place to  
16          hide.  
17          I could piss away my life,  
18          unmolested.  
19          except for the rats.  
20          the rats in my dark small room  
21          very much resented sharing it  
22          with me.  
23          they were large and fearless  
24          and stared at me with eyes  
25          that spoke  
26          an unblinking  
27          death.

28           women were beyond me.

29           they saw something  
30           depraved.  
31           there was one waitress  
32           a little older than  
33           I, she rather smiled,  
34           lingered when she  
35           brought my  
36           coffee.

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37           that was plenty for  
38           me, that was  
39           enough.

40           there was something about  
41           that city, though:  
42           it didn't let me feel guilty  
43           that I had no feeling for the  
44           things so many others  
45           needed.  
46           it let me alone.

47           sitting up in my bed  
48           the lights out,  
49           hearing the outside  
50           sounds,  
51           lifting my cheap  
52           bottle of wine,  
53           letting the warmth of  
54           the grape  
55           enter  
56           me  
57           as I heard the rats  
58           moving about the  
59           room,  
60           I preferred them  
61           to  
62           humans.

63           being lost,  
64           being crazy maybe  
65           is not so bad  
66           if you can be  
67           that way:  
68           undisturbed.

69           New Orleans gave me  
70           that.  
71           nobody ever called  
72           my name.

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73           no telephone,  
74           no car,

75           no job,  
76           no  
77           anything.

78           me and the  
79           rats  
80           and my youth,  
81           one time,  
82           that time  
83           I knew  
84           even through the  
85           nothingness,  
86           it was a  
87           celebration  
88           of something not to  
89           do  
90           but only  
91           know.

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Bukowski, Charles:the damnation of Buk [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           getting old, and older, concerned that  
2           you might not get your driver's license  
3           renewed, concerned that the hangovers  
4           last longer, concerned that you might  
5           not reach the age of 85,  
6           concerned that the poems will stop  
7           arriving.  
8           concerned that you are concerned.

9           concerned that you might die in the  
10          spa.  
11          concerned that you might die on the  
12          freeway while driving in from the  
13          track.  
14          concerned that you might die in your  
15          lap pool.  
16          concerned that the remainder of your  
17          teeth  
18          will not last.

19          concerned about dying but not about  
20          death.

21          concerned that people will no longer  
22          consider you dangerous when  
23          drunk.

24           concerned that you will forget who  
25           the enemy is.

26           concerned that you will forget how to  
27           laugh.

28           concerned that there will be nothing to  
29           drink in hell.

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30           and concerned you will have to  
31           listen to  
32           one poetry reading  
33           after another  
34           after another ...

35           the Los Angeles poets  
36           the New York poets  
37           the Iowa poets

38           the black poets  
39           the white poets  
40           the Chicano poets  
41           the 3rd world poets

42           the female poets  
43           the homosexual poets  
44           the lesbian poets  
45           the bisexual poets  
46           the sexless poets  
47           the failed poets  
48           the famous poets  
49           the dead poets  
50           the etc. poets

51           concerned that the toteboard will  
52           explode into flowers of  
53           shit

54           and the night will never  
55           come.

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Bukowski, Charles: Charles the Lion-Hearted [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           he's 95, lives in a large two story  
2           house.

3           "they want to send me to a rest  
4           home. 'hell,' I tell them, 'this  
5           IS my home!'"

6           he speaks of his grandchildren.  
7           he's outlived his  
8           children.

9           he visits his wife who's also  
10          95.  
11          she's in a rest  
12          home.

13          "she looks great but she doesn't  
14          know who I am."

15          he lives on bacon, tomatoes and  
16          breakfast cereal.

17          he lives on a steep hill.  
18          used to take his little dog for  
19          walks.  
20          the dog died.

21          he walks alone now,  
22          straight-backed,  
23          carrying an  
24          oak cane.  
25          he's 6 foot two,  
26          lean,  
27          jocular,  
28          imposing.

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29          "they can't wait for me to  
30          die, they want my house  
31          and money.  
32          I'm gonna live just to  
33          spite them."

34          I see him in his room upstairs

35 at night  
36 watching tv or  
37 reading.

38 he was married longer than  
39 most men  
40 live.  
41 he still is  
42 only she doesn't know she's  
43 married.

44 he sits up in his room  
45 on top of nine and one  
46 half  
47 decades  
48 neither asking nor  
49 giving  
50 mercy.

51 he is an ocean of  
52 wonder,  
53 he is a shining  
54 rock.

55 quick of mind,  
56 so quick.

57 when death comes for  
58 him  
59 it should be  
60 ashamed.

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61 I so want to see that light burning  
62 in that upstairs  
63 window!

64 when it goes dark  
65 it will be another world  
66 not quite so magic  
67 not quite so good

68 when it goes dark.

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Bukowski, Charles: within the dense overcast [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           the Spaniards had it right and the Greeks had it  
2           right but  
3           my grandmother, heavy with warts, was  
4           confused.

5           Galileo did more than guess and  
6           Salisbury became what?

7           the brightness of doom is anybody's  
8           mess as  
9           donkeys and camels are still put to  
10          use.

11          Cleopatra would have loved  
12          Canadian bacon and  
13          nobody speaks of the  
14          hills of Rome  
15          anymore.

16          the curve ball curves  
17          and vanilla icecream is always  
18          overstocked.

19          600,000 people died in the  
20          siege of Leningrad  
21          and we got Shostakovich's  
22          Seventh.

23          tonight there were gunshots  
24          outside  
25          and I sat and rubbed my  
26          fingers across my greasy  
27          forehead.

28          palaces, palaces,  
29          and oceans with black

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30          filthy  
31          claws.

32          the shortest distance between  
33          2 points is  
34          often  
35          intolerable.

36       who stuck the apple into the  
37       pig's  
38       mouth?  
39       who plucked out his eyes  
40       and baked him  
41       like that?  
42       Cassiodorus?  
43       Cato?

44       the aviators of May  
45       the buried dogs bones  
46       the marshmallow kisses  
47       the yellowed fleece of sound  
48       the  
49       tack  
50       in the foot.

51       Virginia is slim.  
52       Madeline is back.  
53       Tina's on the gin.  
54       Becky's on the phone.  
55       don't  
56       answer.

57       I see you in the closet.  
58       I see you in the dark.  
59       I see you dead.  
60       I see you in the back of a  
61       pick up truck on the  
62       Santa Monica  
63       freeway.

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64       the perfect place to be  
65       in the rain  
66       is in the rain  
67       walking toward a  
68       farmhouse  
69       at one thirty  
70       a.m.  
71       there is a lone light  
72       in an upper  
73       window.  
74       it goes out.  
75       a dog howls.

76       the nature of the dream is  
77       best interpreted by the  
78       dreamer.

79       the snail crawls home.

80 the toes under a blanket  
81 is one of the most magical  
82 sights  
83 ever.

84 wood is frozen  
85 fire.

86 my hand is my hand.  
87 my hand is your hand.

88 the blue shot of  
89 nerve.

90 Turgenev  
91 Turgenev

92 the cloud walks toward  
93 me

94 the pigeon speaks my  
95 name.

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Bukowski, Charles: corsage [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 I suppose Jr. High was the worst.  
2 my friend Teddy began going to  
3 various dances  
4 and talking about it all.  
5 his father loaned him the car  
6 for these  
7 functions.

8 he also had a new wrist watch.  
9 it was still the depression  
10 era and few of us boys  
11 had wrist  
12 watches.

13 Teddy kept lifting up his wrist  
14 and looking at his  
15 watch.  
16 he did it 3 or 4 times

17           within a ten minute  
18           period.

19           "why the hell do you keep  
20           looking at the time?  
21           you going  
22           somewhere?"

23           "maybe, maybe ..."

24           "well, go on then ..."

25           "she kissed me at the  
26           doorway, I can still feel her  
27           lips!"

28           "whose lips?"

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29           "Annabell's, she kissed me  
30           at her door after the  
31           dance!"

32           "listen, Teddy, let's go down to the  
33           lot and get up a  
34           baseball game."

35           "I can't get her out of my mind.  
36           her lips were soft,  
37           warm ..."

38           "Christ, man, who  
39           cares?"

40           "I bought her a corsage for  
41           the dance, she looked so  
42           beautiful ..."

43           "didn't you slip her any  
44           turkey neck?"

45           "what?  
46           listen, I'm in love!"

47           "well, that's what you do

48           then before somebody  
49           else slams her."

50           "don't talk that way, I'm  
51           warning you!"

52           "I can take you, Teddy,  
53           with one ball tied behind  
54           my back."

55           he looked at his watch:  
56           "I gotta go now ..."

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57           "gonna go play with yourself,  
58           Teddy?"

59           "look who's talking!  
60           you don't even have a  
61           girl!"

62           "you don't know what I  
63           have."

64           "you've got nothing but  
65           your hand."

66           "I've got two hands, Teddy."

67           I grabbed him by the shirt and  
68           pulled him in  
69           close.

70           "and just for laughs I just might  
71           kick your ass, real  
72           good."

73           "you're just pissed because  
74           you've got  
75           nobody!"

76           I let him go.

77           "get out of here ..."

78           Teddy turned and  
79           walked off.

80           he'd gotten off easy that  
81           time.  
82           next time I'd kick his ass  
83           from stem to  
84           stern.

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85           it was 1935.  
86           I was standing in my parents'  
87           back yard.  
88           it was a Saturday  
89           afternoon.  
90           my father was in the house  
91           listening to the radio,  
92           the Trojans were playing  
93           Notre Dame.  
94           my mother was in there  
95           doing something and  
96           nothing.

97           I walked in through the back  
98           door.  
99           my mother was in the  
100          kitchen.

101          "Henry, I saw Teddy  
102          leaving.  
103          he's a nice  
104          boy."

105          "yeah ..."

106          "I saw Teddy  
107          all dressed up to go to  
108          the dance.  
109          he looked so  
110          nice!"

111          "yeah ..."

112          "Henry, when are you going  
113          to get a nice girl to take to  
114          a dance?"

115          "I only dance with them in

116           bed!"

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117           "YOU DON'T TALK THAT WAY  
118           TO YOUR MOTHER!"

119           it was my father.  
120           he had been standing there.  
121           it must have been half  
122           time.

123           "don't bother me," I  
124           said.

125           "I'LL BOTHER YOU, I'LL BOTHER  
126           YOU SO YOU'LL NEVER TALK THAT  
127           WAY AGAIN!"

128           "is that right, old man?  
129           come on then, bother  
130           me!"

131           he stood there.  
132           I stood there.

133           nothing happened.

134           "ALL RIGHT," he screamed,  
135           "GO TO YOUR ROOM!  
136           NOW!"

137           I walked past him, on through  
138           the house and out the  
139           door.

140           I walked down the street.  
141           I had no money, I had nowhere to  
142           go.  
143           I just kept  
144           walking.

145           it was a hot summer day  
146           and I just kept walking,

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147           3 blocks, 4 blocks, 5

148        blocks ...

149        then I passed a mongrel dog  
150        going the other  
151        way.

152        his fur was matted and dirty  
153        and his tongue hung out of  
154        one side of his  
155        mouth.

156        I stopped, turned and watched  
157        him trot  
158        off.  
159        then I faced the other way and  
160        continued my  
161        journey.

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Bukowski, Charles: classical music and me [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems  
(1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1        I have no idea how it began.  
2        as a boy I believed that classical music was  
3        for sissies and as a teenager I felt this even  
4        more strongly.

5        yes, I think it began in this record  
6        store.  
7        I was in my booth listening to whatever I  
8        listened to  
9        at that time.  
10       then I heard some music in the next  
11       booth.  
12       the sounds seemed very strange and  
13       unusual.  
14       I saw the man leave his booth and  
15       return the record to the clerk.  
16       I went to the clerk and asked for that  
17       record.  
18       she handed it to me.  
19       I looked at the cover.

20       "but," I said, "this is symphony  
21       music."



22           "yes," said the clerk.

23           I took the record to my booth  
24           and played it.

25           never had I heard such  
26           music.  
27           unfortunately, I no longer  
28           remember what that  
29           piece of marvelous  
30           music was.

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31           I purchased the record.  
32           I had a record player in my  
33           room.  
34           I listened to the record  
35           over and over  
36           again.

37           I was hooked.

38           soon I found a 2nd hand  
39           record store.  
40           there I found that you could  
41           turn in 3 record albums and  
42           get two back.

43           I was fairly poor  
44           but most of my money went  
45           for wine and  
46           classical music.  
47           I loved to mix the two  
48           together.

49           I went through that entire  
50           2nd hand record  
51           store.

52           my tastes were strange.  
53           I liked Beethoven but  
54           preferred Brahms and  
55           Tchaikovsky.  
56           Borodin didn't work.  
57           Chopin was only good  
58           at moments.  
59           Mozart was only good  
60           when I was feeling  
61           good and I seldom  
62           felt that  
63           way.  
64           Smetana I found

65           obvious and Sibelius

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66           awesome.  
67           Ives was too self-comfortable.  
68           Goldmark, I felt, was very  
69           underrated.  
70           Wagner was a roaring miracle  
71           of dark energy.  
72           Haydn was love turned loose  
73           into sound.  
74           Handel created things that  
75           took your head and lifted it  
76           to the ceiling.  
77           Eric Coates was unbelievably  
78           cute and astute.  
79           and if you listened to Bach  
80           long enough  
81           you didn't want to listen to  
82           anybody else.  
83           there were dozens  
84           more....

85           I was on the move from  
86           city to city  
87           and carrying a record player  
88           and records along was  
89           impossible  
90           so I began listening to the  
91           radio  
92           and picking up what I  
93           could.

94           the problem with the radio  
95           was  
96           that there were a few standard  
97           works they played over and  
98           over.  
99           I heard them too often  
100          and could anticipate each note  
101          before it  
102          arrived.  
103          but the good part was

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104          that, at times, I heard new  
105          music that I had never heard  
106          before by composers I had  
107          never heard of, read about.  
108          I was surprised at the many  
109          composers, fairly unknown,  
110          at least to me, who could  
111          produce these wondrous  
112          and stirring  
113          works.  
114          works that I would never

115       hear again.

116       I have continued to listen to  
117       classical music via the radio  
118       for decades.  
119       I am listening as I write  
120       this to Mahler's 9th.  
121       Mahler was always one  
122       of my favorites.  
123       it's possible to listen to  
124       his works again and  
125       again without  
126       tiring of  
127       them.

128       through the women, through  
129       the jobs, through the horrible  
130       times and the good times,  
131       through deaths, through every-  
132       thing, in and out of hospitals,  
133       in and out of love, through the  
134       decades that have gone so  
135       swiftly  
136       there have been so many  
137       nights of listening  
138       to classical music on the  
139       radio.  
140       almost every  
141       night.

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142       I wish I could remember the name of  
143       the piece I first heard in that  
144       record booth  
145       but it evades me.  
146       for some odd reason I do  
147       remember the conductor:  
148       Eugene Ormandy.  
149       one of the  
150       finest.

151       now Mahler is in the room  
152       with me  
153       and the chills run up my  
154       arms, reach the back  
155       of my neck ...  
156       it's all so unbelievably  
157       splendid,  
158       splendid!  
159       and I can't read a note of  
160       music.  
161       But I have found a part of  
162       the world  
163       like no other part of the

164 world.

165 it gave heart to my  
166 life, helped me get  
167 to  
168 here.

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Bukowski, Charles:transport [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1 I was a scraggly bum most of my  
2 life  
3 and to get from one city to another  
4 I took the buses.  
5 I don't know how many times I  
6 saw the Grand Canyon,  
7 going east to west  
8 and west to east.  
9 it was just dusty windows,  
10 the backs of necks, stop-offs at  
11 intolerable eating places  
12 and always the old  
13 constipation  
14 blues.  
15 and once, a half-assed romance  
16 with no socially redeeming  
17 value.

18 then I found myself riding the  
19 trains.  
20 the food was beautiful  
21 and the restrooms were  
22 lovely  
23 and I stayed in the bar  
24 cars.  
25 some of them were  
26 so grand:  
27 round curving picture  
28 windows  
29 and large overhead  
30 domes,  
31 the sun shone right on  
32 down through your  
33 glass  
34 and at night you could  
35 get  
36 stinko

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37           and watch the stars and  
38           the moon ride  
39           right along with  
40           you.  
41           and the best, since there was more  
42           space  
43           people weren't forced  
44           to speak to  
45           you.

46           then after the trains I found  
47           myself on the  
48           jetliners,  
49           quick trips to cities and  
50           back.  
51           I was like many of the  
52           others:  
53           I had a briefcase  
54           and was writing on pieces  
55           of paper.  
56           I was on the hustle.  
57           and I hustled and hounded the  
58           stewardesses for drink after  
59           drink.  
60           the food and the view were  
61           bad.  
62           and the people tended to  
63           talk to you  
64           but there were ways to  
65           discourage  
66           that.  
67           the worst about flying was that  
68           there were people waiting for  
69           you at the airports.  
70           baggage was no problem:  
71           you had your carry-on bag,  
72           change of underwear, socks,  
73           one shirt, toothbrush, razor,  
74           liquor.

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75           then the jetliners stopped.  
76           you stayed in the city,  
77           you shackled with unsavory  
78           ladies and you purchased a  
79           series of old cars.  
80           you were much luckier with the  
81           cars than with the  
82           ladies,  
83           you bought the cars for a  
84           song  
85           and drove them with a classic  
86           abandon.  
87           they never needed an oil  
88           change and they lasted and  
89           lasted.  
90           on one the springs were  
91           broken.

92           on another they stuck up  
93           out of the seat and into your  
94           ass.  
95           one had no reverse  
96           gear.  
97           this was good for me,  
98           it was like playing a game of  
99           chess---  
100          keeping your King from getting  
101          checkmated.  
102          another would only start  
103          when parked on a  
104          hill.  
105          there was one where the  
106          lights wouldn't go on until you  
107          hit a bump  
108          HARD.

109          of course, they all died  
110          finally.  
111          and it was always a true  
112          heartbreaker for me when

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113          I had to watch them towed off  
114          to the junkyard.

115          another I lost when it was impounded  
116          on a drunk driving  
117          rap.  
118          they sent me an impound bill that was  
119          four times larger than the purchase  
120          price  
121          so I let them keep  
122          it.

123          the best car I ever had was the one  
124          my first wife gave me when divorcing  
125          me.  
126          it was two years old,  
127          as old as our marriage.

128          but the last car was (and is)  
129          the very best, purchased new for  
130          \$30,000 cash. (well, I wrote  
131          them a check).  
132          it has everything: air bag,  
133          anti-lock brakes, everything.

134          also, 2 or 3 times a year  
135          people send a limousine  
136          so we can attend various  
137          functions.  
138          these are very nice

139 because you can drink like  
140 hell and not worry about the  
141 drunk tank.

142 but I'm going to bypass that  
143 private plane, that private  
144 boat.  
145 upkeep and rental space  
146 can be a real pain in the  
147 butt.

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148 I'll tell you one thing, though,  
149 one night not so long  
150 ago  
151 I had a dream that I  
152 could fly.  
153 I mean, just by working  
154 my arms and my legs  
155 I could fly through the  
156 air  
157 and I did.  
158 there were all these people  
159 on the ground,  
160 they were reaching up their  
161 arms and trying to pull me  
162 down  
163 but  
164 they couldn't do  
165 it.

166 I felt like pissing on  
167 them.  
168 they were so  
169 jealous.

170 all they had to do was  
171 to work their way  
172 slowly up to it  
173 as I had  
174 done.

175 such people think  
176 success grows on  
177 trees.

178 you and I,  
179 we know  
180 better.

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Bukowski, Charles:betrayed [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           the big thrill  
2           was being quite young and  
3           reading Of Time and the  
4           River  
5           by Thomas Wolfe.  
6           what a fat and wondrous  
7           book!  
8           I read it again and  
9           again.

10          then a couple of decades  
11          went by  
12          and I read the book  
13          again.

14          I disliked the poetic prose  
15          right off.  
16          I put the book down and  
17          looked about the  
18          room.

19          I felt cheated.

20          the thrill was gone.

21          I decided to leave town.

22          I was in Los Angeles.

23          two days later I was sitting on a  
24          Greyhound bus  
25          going to Miami.

26          and I had a pint of whiskey  
27          in one pocket  
28          and a paperback copy of  
29          Fathers and Sons  
30          in the  
31          other.



Bukowski, Charles:torched-out [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           the worst was closing the bars at  
2           2 a.m.  
3           with my lady.  
4           going home to get a couple hours  
5           sleep,  
6           then as a substitute postal carrier  
7           to be on call at  
8           5:30 a.m.  
9           sitting there with the other  
10          subs  
11          along the little ledge  
12          outside the magazine  
13          cases.

14          too often given a route to  
15          case and carry,  
16          starting 15 or 20 minutes  
17          late,  
18          the sweat pouring down  
19          your face,  
20          gathering under the  
21          armpits.  
22          you're dizzy, sick,  
23          trying to get the case  
24          up, pull it down and  
25          sack it for the truck to  
26          pick up.

27          you worked on sheer  
28          nerve,  
29          reaching down into the  
30          gut,  
31          flailing, fighting  
32          as the last minutes,  
33          the last  
34          seconds

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35          rushed toward  
36          you.

37          then to get on the  
38          route with the people  
39          and the dogs,  
40          to make the rounds  
41          on a new  
42          route,  
43          making your legs  
44          go,

45 making your feet  
46 walk  
47 as the sun baked  
48 you alive,  
49 you fought through  
50 your first  
51 round  
52 with 6 or 7 more to  
53 go.  
54 never time for lunch,  
55 you'd get a write-up  
56 if you were 5 minutes  
57 late.  
58 a few too many write-  
59 ups and you were  
60 finished,  
61 they moved you  
62 out.

63 it was a living, a  
64 deathly  
65 living, to somehow  
66 finish your route,  
67 come in and often  
68 be told  
69 you were assigned  
70 to the night pick-  
71 up run, another  
72 ball-buster.

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73 or  
74 if you got out of that  
75 to drive on in  
76 to your place  
77 to find your lady  
78 already drunk,  
79 dirty dishes in the  
80 sink,  
81 the dog unfed,  
82 the flowers unwatered,  
83 the bed  
84 unmade,  
85 the ashtrays full of  
86 punched-out  
87 lipstick-smeared  
88 cigarettes.

89 then to get in the tub  
90 with a beer.  
91 you were no longer  
92 young,  
93 you were no longer  
94 anything,  
95 just worn down and

96 out  
97 with your lady in the  
98 other room  
99 lisping inanities and  
100 insanities,  
101 pouring her glasses  
102 of cheap  
103 wine.

104 you were always going  
105 to get rid of her,  
106 you were working on  
107 that,  
108 you were caught between  
109 the post office and  
110 her,

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111 it was the vise of  
112 death,  
113 each side crushing in  
114 upon you.

115 "Jesus, baby, please,  
116 please, just shut up for  
117 a little while ..."

118 "ah, you asshole!  
119 what're you doing in  
120 there, playing with  
121 yourself?"

122 to come roaring out  
123 of that tub, all the impossibilities  
124 of that day and that life  
125 corkscrewing through you  
126 ripping away  
127 everything.

128 out of that tub,  
129 a naked, roaring rocket  
130 of battered body and  
131 mind:

132 "YOU GOD DAMNED WHORE,  
133 WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT  
134 ANYTHING?  
135 SITTING THERE ON YOUR  
136 DEAD ASS AND  
137 SUCKING AT THE VINO!"

138 to rush into the other room,

139 looking all about,  
140 the walls whirling,  
141 the entire world tilting in  
142 against you.

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143 "DON'T HIT ME! DON'T HIT  
144 ME!  
145 YOU'D HIT ME BUT YOU  
146 WOULDN'T HIT A  
147 MAN!"

148 "HELL NO, I WOULDN'T  
149 HIT A MAN, YOU THINK  
150 I'M CRAZY?"

151 to grab the bottle from  
152 her,  
153 to drain damn near  
154 half of it.  
155 to find another bottle,  
156 open it,  
157 pour a tall waterglass  
158 full,  
159 then to smash the glass  
160 against a  
161 wall,  
162 to explode it like  
163 that  
164 in purple glory.

165 to find a new glass,  
166 sit down and pour a  
167 full one.

168 she'd be quiet  
169 then.  
170 we'd drink an  
171 hour or so  
172 like that.

173 then, to get  
174 dressed,  
175 cigarette dangling,  
176 you are feeling somewhat  
177 better.

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178 then you are moving

179       toward the  
180       door.

181       "hey! where the hell  
182       you going?"

183       "I'm going to the fucking  
184       bar!"

185       "not without me!  
186       not without me, buster!"

187       "all right, get your ass  
188       into gear!"

189       to walk there together.  
190       to get our stools.  
191       to sit before the long mirror.  
192       the mirror you always hated to  
193       look into.

194       to tell the bartender,  
195       "vodka 7."

196       to have her tell the bartender,  
197       "scotch and water."

198       everything was far away  
199       then,  
200       the post office, the world,  
201       the past and the  
202       future.

203       to have our drinks arrive.  
204       to take the first hit in the  
205       dark bar.

206       life couldn't get any  
207       better.

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1       there was Auden, I don't remember  
2       which small room I first read him  
3       in  
4       and there was Spender and I don't  
5       know which small room  
6       either  
7       and then there was Ezra  
8       and I remember that room,  
9       there was a torn screen  
10      that the flies came through  
11      and it was Los Angeles  
12      and the woman said to me,  
13      "Jesus Christ, you reading those  
14      Cantos again!"  
15      she liked e. e. cummings, though,  
16      she thought he was really  
17      good and she was  
18      right.

19      I remember when I read Turgenev,  
20      though, I had just come out of the  
21      drunk tank and I was living  
22      alone  
23      and I thought he was really a  
24      subtle and funny son of a  
25      bitch.

26      Hemingway I read everywhere,  
27      sometimes a few times over  
28      and he made me feel brave  
29      and tough  
30      until one day  
31      it all just stopped cold for me  
32      and worse than that,  
33      Ernie became an  
34      irritant.

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35      my Jeffers period was sometime  
36      in Los Angeles, some room, some  
37      job,  
38      the same woman was back  
39      and she said,  
40      "Jesus, how can you read this  
41      crap?"  
42      one time when she was gone  
43      I found many magazines  
44      under the bed.  
45      I pulled them out  
46      and found that the contents were  
47      all about murder  
48      and it was all about women  
49      who were tortured, killed,

50           dismembered and so  
51           forth with the  
52           lurid photos  
53           in black and  
54           white.  
55           that stuff wasn't for  
56           me.

57           my first encounter with Henry  
58           Miller was via paperback  
59           on a bus through Arizona.  
60           he was great when he stuck  
61           to reality  
62           but when he got ethereal  
63           when he got to philosophizing  
64           he got as dry and boring as  
65           the passing  
66           landscape.  
67           I left him in the men's crapper  
68           at a hamburger  
69           stop.

70           I got hold of Celine's Journey  
71           and read it straight through  
72           while in bed eating crackers.

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73           I kept reading, eating the  
74           crackers and reading, reading,  
75           laughing out loud,  
76           thinking, at last I've met a man  
77           who writes better than  
78           I.  
79           I finished the book and then  
80           drank much water.  
81           the crackers swelled up  
82           inside of me  
83           and I got the worst  
84           god damned stomach  
85           ache of my  
86           life.

87           I was living with my first  
88           wife.  
89           she worked for the L.A.  
90           Sheriff's Dept.  
91           and she came in to  
92           find me doubled up  
93           and moaning.

94           "Oh, what happened?"

95 "I've just read the world's  
96 greatest  
97 writer!"

98 "But you said you were."

99 "I'm second, baby ..."

100 I read F. D.'s Notes from the  
101 Underground  
102 in a small El Paso  
103 library  
104 after sleeping the night  
105 on a park bench

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106 during a sand  
107 storm.  
108 after reading that book  
109 I knew I had a long way  
110 to go as a  
111 writer.

112 I don't know where I read  
113 T. S. Eliot.  
114 he made a small dent  
115 which soon ironed  
116 out.

117 there were many rooms,  
118 many books,  
119 D. H. Lawrence, Gorky,  
120 A. Huxley, Sherwood  
121 Anderson, Sinclair Lewis,  
122 James Thurber, Dos Passos,  
123 etc  
124 Kafka.  
125 Schopenhauer, Nietzsche,  
126 Rabelais.  
127 Hamsun.

128 as a very young man  
129 I worked as a shipping clerk,  
130 made the bars at  
131 night,  
132 came into the roominghouse,  
133 went to bed  
134 and read the  
135 books.  
136 I had 3 or 4 of them in  
137 bed with me (what a  
138 man!) and then I would  
139 sleep.



140 my landlady finally told  
141 me, "You know, you read those

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142 books in bed and about every  
143 hour or so one of them will  
144 fall to the floor.  
145 You are keeping everybody  
146 awake!"

147 (I was on the 3rd floor.)

148 what days and nights those  
149 were.

150 now I can't read anything,  
151 not even the newspaper.  
152 and, of course, I can't watch  
153 tv except for the boxing  
154 matches.  
155 I do hear some news  
156 on the car radio  
157 while driving the freeway  
158 and waiting for the  
159 traffic  
160 reports.

161 but you know, my former  
162 life as a bibliophile, it  
163 possibly kept me from  
164 murdering somebody,  
165 myself  
166 included.  
167 it kept me from being an  
168 industrialist.  
169 it allowed me to endure  
170 some women  
171 that most men would never  
172 be able to live  
173 with.  
174 it gave me space, a  
175 pause.

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176 it helped me to write  
177 this

178 (in this room,  
179 like the other rooms)

180       perhaps for some young man  
181       now  
182       needing  
183       to laugh at the  
184       impossibilities  
185       which are here  
186       always  
187       after we are  
188       not.

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Bukowski, Charles: shooting the moon in the eye [from The Last Night of the Earth  
Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           it was just a small room, no bathroom,  
2           hot plate, bed, 2 chairs, a bed, sink,  
3           phone in hall.  
4           I was on the 2nd floor of a hotel.  
5           I had a job.  
6           I got in about 6:30 p.m.  
7           and by 8 p.m.  
8           there would be 4 or 5 people  
9           in the room,  
10          all drunks,  
11          all drinking wine.  
12          sometimes there would be  
13          6 or 7.  
14          most of them sat on the  
15          bed.  
16          oh, there was a radio,  
17          we played the radio,  
18          drank and  
19          talked.

20          it was strange, there was  
21          always a sense of  
22          excitement there,  
23          some laughter and  
24          sometimes serious  
25          arguments that were  
26          somewhat  
27          stupid.

28          we were never asked  
29          to be quiet,  
30          the manager never  
31          bothered us,  
32          or the

33 police.  
34 with an exception  
35 or two,

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36 there were no  
37 physical  
38 confrontations.  
39 I'd always call an  
40 end to the parties  
41 around 3 a.m.

42 "ah, come on Hank!  
43 we're just getting  
44 started!"

45 "come on, come  
46 on, everybody  
47 out!"

48 and,  
49 with an exception  
50 or two,  
51 I always slept  
52 without a  
53 lady.

54 we called  
55 that place,  
56 the Hotel from  
57 Hell.

58 I had no idea  
59 what we were  
60 trying to  
61 do.

62 I think we were  
63 just celebrating  
64 being  
65 alive.

66 that small room  
67 full of smoke and  
68 music and

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69 voices,  
70 night after night  
71 after  
72 night.

73 the poor, the mad,  
74 the lost.

75 we lit up that hotel  
76 with our twisted  
77 souls  
78 and it loved  
79 us.

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Bukowski, Charles:nirvana [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1 not much chance,  
2 completely cut loose from  
3 purpose,  
4 he was a young man  
5 riding a bus  
6 through North Carolina  
7 on the way to  
8 somewhere  
9 and it began to snow  
10 and the bus stopped  
11 at a little cafe  
12 in the hills  
13 and the passengers  
14 entered.

15 he sat at the counter  
16 with the others,  
17 he ordered and the  
18 food arrived.  
19 the meal was  
20 particularly  
21 good  
22 and the  
23 coffee.

24 the waitress was  
25 unlike the women  
26 he had  
27 known.  
28 she was unaffected,  
29 there was a natural  
30 humor which came  
31 from her.  
32 the fry cook said  
33 crazy things.

34 the dishwasher,  
35 in back,

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36 laughed, a good  
37 clean  
38 pleasant  
39 laugh.

40 the young man watched  
41 the snow through the  
42 windows.

43 he wanted to stay  
44 in that cafe  
45 forever.

46 the curious feeling  
47 swam through him  
48 that everything  
49 was  
50 beautiful  
51 there,  
52 that it would always  
53 stay beautiful  
54 there.

55 then the bus driver  
56 told the passengers  
57 that it was time  
58 to board.

59 the young man  
60 thought, I'll just sit  
61 here, I'll just stay  
62 here.

63 but then  
64 he rose and followed  
65 the others into the  
66 bus.

67 he found his seat  
68 and looked at the cafe  
69 through the bus  
70 window.

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71 then the bus moved

72           off, down a curve,  
73           downward, out of  
74           the hills.

75           the young man  
76           looked straight  
77           forward.  
78           he heard the other  
79           passengers  
80           speaking  
81           of other things,  
82           or they were  
83           reading  
84           or  
85           attempting to  
86           sleep.

87           they had not  
88           noticed  
89           the  
90           magic.

91           the young man  
92           put his head to  
93           one side,  
94           closed his  
95           eyes,  
96           pretended to  
97           sleep.  
98           there was nothing  
99           else to do---  
100          just listen to the  
101          sound of the  
102          engine,  
103          the sound of the  
104          tires  
105          in the  
106          snow.

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Bukowski, Charles:an invitation [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           hey Chinaski:  
2           I am a filmmaker in the Hollywood area and  
3           I am currently making a movie in which I  
4           would like to include you.  
5           The nature of the movie is about an  
6           alcoholic Satan who decides to leave hell  
7           for a while and have a vacation in  
8           Hollywood.

9           This particular version of Satan is a fun  
10       guy who can't get enough booze, SLUTS,  
11       or adventure.  
12       Satan, while in Hollywood looks up his  
13       old buddies (Ghosts) Richard Burton,  
14       Errol Flynn and Idi Amin (still alive).  
15       He proceeds to get smashed with these  
16       guys and they all pass out on him so  
17       he needs to look up a mortal worthy of  
18       drinking with him (YOU).  
19       The scene I have envisioned with you  
20       would be to be sitting around a crummy  
21       joint, drinking Mezcal and playing Russian  
22       Roulette with Satan while 2 big fat chicks  
23       are slapping each other with Salamis.  
24       I would want everybody in the scene to be  
25       SMASHED.  
26       I can tell you now that I couldn't pay you  
27       anything up front xcept Booze and  
28       adventure.  
29       ---However---  
30       I am going to hopefully be able to release  
31       this movie one day and would be happy to  
32       work out a contractual agreement that  
33       would arrange a royalty rate---(if you are  
34       interested.)  
35       And thanks for mentioning in your  
36       writing, KNUT HAMSUN.

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37       he has turned out to be one of my  
38       faves.  
39       And just remember,  
40       WHEN IN DOUBT,  
41       PASS OUT!

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Bukowski, Charles:batting order: [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems (1992),  
Black Sparrow Press]

1           Hemingway's been in a slump,  
2       can't hit a curve ball  
3       anymore,  
4       I'm dropping him to the 6th  
5       spot.  
6       I'm putting Celine in  
7       cleanup,  
8       he's inconsistent but when  
9       he's good there's no  
10      better.  
11      Hamsun I'm going to use

12 in the number 3 spot,  
13 he hits them hard and  
14 often.  
15 lead-off, well, lead-off  
16 I'll use e. e. cummings,  
17 he's fast, can beat out a  
18 bunt.  
19 I'll use Pound in the  
20 number two spot, Ezra  
21 is one of the better  
22 hit and run men  
23 in the business.  
24 the 5 spot I'll give to  
25 Dostoevsky,  
26 he's a heavy hitter, great with  
27 men on base.  
28 the 7 spot I'll give to Robinson  
29 Jeffers, can you think of anybody  
30 better?  
31 he can drill a rock  
32 350 feet.  
33 the 8 spot, I've got my  
34 catcher, J. D. Salinger,  
35 if we can find  
36 him.  
37 and pitching?

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38 how about Nietzsche?  
39 he's strong!  
40 been breaking all the tables  
41 in the training  
42 room.

43 coaches?

44 I'll take Kierkegaard and  
45 Sartre,  
46 gloomy fellows,  
47 but none know this  
48 game better.

49 when we field this team,  
50 it's all over,  
51 gentlemen.

52 we're going to kick some  
53 ass, most likely  
54 yours.

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Bukowski, Charles:the open canvas [from The Last Night of the Earth Poems  
(1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1            listening to organ music on the radio  
2            tonight,  
3            the door to the small balcony is  
4            open,  
5            it is 11:07 p.m., cold, a night of  
6            silence except for the  
7            radio, the  
8            organ music,  
9            and I get this vision  
10          of a thin, tall man at the key-  
11          board, he is more than pale, al-  
12          most a chalky  
13          white.  
14          the music boils in the  
15          gloom.  
16          the walls about him are  
17          unpainted, cold,  
18          austere  
19          indifferent.

20          a full glass of wine sits  
21          untouched  
22          on a rough hand-made table  
23          to his  
24          right.

25          the music seeps through his  
26          bones,  
27          centuries bend and  
28          unwind as the invisible dog  
29          of darkness  
30          walks by  
31          in a half circle  
32          behind him,  
33          then blends into  
34          neurons.

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35          the man continues to  
36          play.  
37          the world turns upsidedown  
38          with a fixed gentleness  
39          but the walls, the man,  
40          the sounds continue  
41          as before.

42          then the world returns to its  
43          natural course.

44           one tonality breeds  
45           another.  
46           the sounds of black strings  
47           of beads.  
48           the sound is one  
49           yet not one.

50           then the music  
51           stops.

52           the man sits.

53           he is thoughtless.

54           the keys of the organ assume  
55           an immensity.

56           the walls about him move away  
57           faster than the eye  
58           can note,  
59           then they  
60           return.

61           the man coughs, looks to  
62           his left,  
63           looks down,  
64           touches the keys and  
65           is taken  
66           again.

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Bukowski, Charles: in the shadow of the rose [from The Last Night of the Earth  
Poems (1992), Black Sparrow Press]

1           branching out, grubbing down,  
2           taking stairways down to hell,  
3           reestablishing the vanishing  
4           point, trying a different  
5           bat, a different stance, alter-  
6           ing diet and manner of  
7           walking, readjusting the  
8           system, photographing your  
9           dinosaur dream,  
10          driving your machine with  
11          more grace and care,  
12          noticing the flowers talking

13           to you,  
14           realizing the gigantic agony  
15           of the terrapin,  
16           you pray for rain like an  
17           Indian,  
18           slide a fresh clip into the  
19           automatic,  
20           turn out the lights and  
21           wait.

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